

# THE ARGOSY.

NOVEMBER, 1891.

## THE FATE OF THE HARA DIAMOND.

### CHAPTER XI.

CHASING "LA BELLE ROSE."

IT was broad day when Captain Ducie awoke. Even before his eyes were open, or he was conscious of where he was, there was upon him the overwhelming sense of some great calamity.

His gaze wandered round the familiar room, and as it did so, he asked himself what it was that had befallen him.

Before he had time to consider the question, or even to answer it, a great shock went through his heart, and with a loud cry he sprang from his bed on to the floor.

"The Diamond!"

He felt for it. It was gone. Even before his fingers had time to touch the seal-skin pouch his instinct told him that it was not there. He turned as white as a man at the point of death, and sank into a chair with a deep groan. His chin dropped on his breast, and two great tears rolled slowly from his eyes and fell to the ground.

A disarrangement of the carpet attracted his eye. It had been turned back for the space of a yard or so, leaving the boards bare. On this bare patch was a tiny cone of white ash.

Ducie's suspicions were aroused in a moment. He stooped and took up a pinch of the ash and smelt it. It emitted a faint odour, similar to that more powerful odour which had overcome him so strangely in the course of the night.

No recollection of his dream, or of that still more singular vision in which Cleon had acted so prominent a part, had touched his memory since waking. But now, by one of those peculiar mental processes with which all of us are familiar, although we may not be able to explain them, the faint perfume that still pervaded the ash he had taken up between his fingers brought vividly back to his recollection every scene, real and imaginary, in which he had acted a part during his sleeping hours.

The five of clubs and his game of cards with the Memphian statue—he remembered that, and he at once put it aside as nothing more than a dream of a somewhat bizarre character. After that, the strange odour that filled his room, precisely similar to that of the ash in his hand; the sudden apparition of Cleon; the dagger, and the rape of the Diamond: were those things dreams or realities? Dreams, nothing but idle dreams, he should have replied at any other time, but with the sense of his irreparable loss eating into his very soul, he could only acknowledge that for him they made up a bitter reality.

Cleon had been there in person, and had succeeded in stealing the Diamond.

With a terrible string of imprecations on the mulatto's head, Ducie flung open the casement and let in the sweet morning air. There were two more tiny cones of white ash, similar to the first, on other parts of the floor.

"That fiend of a mulatto has obtained access to my room," muttered Ducie to himself. "The powerful odour which had such a strange effect upon me must have been emitted by the pastilles, the ashes of which are before me. The pastilles were doubtless compounded of some strong narcotics, probably of certain Oriental drugs with the qualities of which Cleon was acquainted. I have been the victim of an infernal plot."

That Cleon had been there could not be doubted; but where was he now? Ducie halted in his troubled walk as this question put itself to him, and turned to examine the door. It was unbolted, but otherwise shut. His custom was to bolt it every night before getting into bed; but did he really bolt it last night? He could not recollect. Considering the state in which he was when he came to bed, was not the probability in favour of his having left it unfastened? In any case, that was now a point of little consequence. The Diamond was gone, and Cleon was doubtless gone with it. The mulatto was not such a fool as to remain in the neighbourhood of a man whom he had mortally offended, especially when his interests imperatively demanded that he should get safely away. Between him and Ducie the case was now one of life and death.

A fresh thought struck him, and he turned to look at his watch. It was a quarter past six. The Southampton boat did not sail till a quarter to seven. Was it not most probable that Cleon, calculating on his, Ducie's, not awaking till after that time, would attempt to leave the island by the early boat? It was most probable that he would do so. "But if he leaves Jersey, I leave it with him," murmured the Captain. "I shall certainly kill him the first opportunity I have of doing so."

Captain Ducie's window commanded a view of that end of the pier from which the steamer started. He could see a knot of passengers and their luggage already assembled. It was hardly likely that the

mulatto would be one of them, still Ducie thought that he might as well satisfy himself on that point. On his dressing-table was a very powerful field-glass. Ducie took it up and directed it full on the clump of people at the end of the pier. His eye ranged over the component parts one by one, but no Cleon was to be seen. He was hardly disappointed, because he had not expected to find the mulatto there. Before putting down the glass, with an instinct that to him was like second nature, he swept the horizon of sky and sea with it. Elizabeth Castle and the whole expanse of St. Aubin's Bay were visible to him. The morning was clear—deceitfully clear—and Ducie's experienced eye told him that a change of weather was at hand. Coming back from the horizon his eye took in the features nearer home. One or two pair-oar boats were paddling lazily about just outside the harbour. Beyond them were three or four sailing boats with their white wings outspread to catch the light and fickle breeze which seemed this morning as if it could not make up its mind to blow steadily from one point for more than five minutes at a time. The outermost of the sailing boats was tacking out of the harbour with every inch of its tiny sails spread to catch the wind. In this boat were three men, two of them sailors, the third evidently a passenger, probably some visitor to the island going out on a fishing excursion. Such would have been Ducie's natural conclusion had he cared to think about the matter at all. The boat came for a moment within the range of his glass, and in that moment one of the three men turned his head as if to see what progress had been made from land. Ducie gave a start and a cry. The man who had looked back was none other than the mulatto.

One more steady look at the boat and its occupants and then Captain Ducie went on dressing with all speed. He understood the case in a moment. Cleon would not venture to leave the island by the steamer, fearing, probably, that she might be boarded by Ducie before leaving. His plan had been to hire a smack to take him either to the French coast or to Guernsey; and had it not happened to be dead low water about the time he ought to have got away, and the boats to be all lying high and dry in the harbour: two facts which had probably never entered into his calculations: he would have been a dozen miles from St. Helier by this time, and might have set pursuit at defiance.

In five minutes Captain Ducie was ready to start. His field-glass was slung over his shoulder. In one pocket of his gray shooting-jacket he carried a Colt's revolver, and in the other a flask containing brandy, and a few biscuits.

"Unless I am greatly mistaken," muttered Ducie to himself as he made his way with rapid strides towards the basin, "my friend Martin's little *Demoiselle* will outsail yonder clumsy craft on a light wind, in which case Mr. Cleon and I will have an earlier reckoning than he dreams of."

Captain Ducie was fortunate enough to find his friend Martin smoking an early pipe by the edge of the basin, and watching his tiny craft with a loving eye as she curtsied lightly to the incoming tide. Martin was a handsome, stalwart young fellow, whose ancestors for five hundred years back had followed the same occupation in the same place. Ducie had employed him several times on fishing excursions, and the two were sufficiently well known to each other. His boat, *La Demoiselle*, was famed, in the hands of her master, as being one of the fleetest little craft on the island.

A few words sufficed to let Martin understand what was required of him, and three minutes later the *Demoiselle* with outspread wings was skimming saucily over the crests of the tide in pursuit of the other boat, which Martin pronounced to be the *Belle Rose*. Martin's assistant had been left behind in order that the *Demoiselle* might sail as lightly as possible, Ducie himself engaging to assist in working the little craft.

*La Belle Rose* had a clear half-hour's start, and was working out nearly due south, that being her best tack for sailing as the wind then was. "She'll take a turn sou'east before another ten minutes is over," said Martin. "You see, sir, if she don't; and then she'll make straight for the Normandy coast."

"Martin," said Captain Ducie impressively, "on board yonder boat is a man who has robbed me of that which was of more importance to me than all else in the world."

"Master!" exclaimed Martin, in surprise.

"What I say is true. Now, listen. I want my revenge—as you would want yours were you in my place—eh?"

Martin nodded his head gravely, and drew a knife in pantomime.

"Consequently," resumed Ducie, "I want you to catch *La Belle Rose*. She has got a long start. Can you come up with her?"

"Master, I will try. The *Demoiselle* has never failed me yet when I've put her to the proof, and I don't think she will fail me to-day. We must steer more easterly, and not as if we were following the other boat; and then when she tacks, as she must do soon, we shall have gained a full half mile on her."

Ducie was steering, and he saw that by following the sailor's advice, the *Demoiselle* would cut off a large slice of the angle which must necessarily be made by the *Belle Rose* before she could touch the nearest part of the French coast. Besides which, such a course would divert suspicion from their real intentions, and in a stern chase that goes for something.

Ducie lighted a cigar, and passed his flask forward to the young sailor. "We shall have rain and more wind, sir, before the day is three hours older," said the latter.

"So much the better," answered Ducie quietly. "A gloomy deed should have a gloomy day. Martin, either the man in yonder boat or I will never see another sunrise. Perhaps neither of us may."



The young sailor gave his companion a look that was not unmixed with admiration. There was something that touched his wild notions of justice in the idea of a man being his own avenger.

Captain Ducie really meant what he said. He was thoroughly impressed with the belief that either for himself or Cleon that would be the last of earthly days. There was an element of gloom at the bottom of his nature—a dark abyss that had never been thoroughly sounded till a few hours ago. But the loss of his Diamond, preceeded as it was by the unaccountable desertion of Mirpah Van Loal—Love and Fortune both gone in a few short hours—had served to raise a demon in his soul of which he had heretofore been thoroughly master. Now it mastered him, and he gave himself up to it without a struggle. But the grand calm of a thoroughbred Englishman did not desert him even now. The young sailor discerned no change in him from the Captain Ducie who had gone out fishing but four days before, save, perhaps, that his eyebrows seemed to come down a shade lower, and that the eyes themselves were a shade darker, and that his voice was somewhat graver than common. Otherwise there was no outward sign to tell of the change within, and yet Jean Martin had an instinctive sense that he had a desperate man aboard his tiny craft—one determined to carry out his own will to the end, however terrible that end might be.

Captain Ducie sat in the stern and steered the *Demoiselle*, taking the word occasionally from Jean Martin. His glass was beside him, and now and then he took a peep at the chase. The different tacks on which the two boats were steering would have seemed, in a landsman's eye, to be hopelessly widening the distance between them, but when the *Belle Rose* suddenly yawed round and began to steer nearly due east of her previous course, Ducie saw the wisdom of Martin's advice. The two boats had, so to speak, been sailing down the opposite sides of a triangle. The *Belle Rose* had completed her side, and having turned the corner, was now sailing along the line of the base. But before she could reach the opposite end of the base, she would be intercepted by the *Demoiselle*.

Up to this time the progress of the *Demoiselle* seemed to have been unheeded by the people in the *Belle Rose*. But as soon as it became evident to those in the latter that the two boats were rapidly nearing, and must in a few minutes cross each other's line within speaking distance, a slight commotion was visible on board the *Belle Rose*.

Suddenly Martin, who had Ducie's glass to his eye, cried out :

"They are getting suspicious of us. They are taking stock of us through their glasses—and—no—yes, by the nightcap of St. Jacques ! there's a black man on board the *Belle Rose* !"

"He is the man of whom I am in pursuit," said Ducie, from the stern. Then he added : "Keep your eye on them, Martin. Watch every movement, and tell me all you see."

"They have not seen your face yet, master, and they seem easier in their minds. But the black man keeps his glass to his eye. Ah, thief! scélérat! Jean Martin would like to have his fingers round your throat! Do you wish me to run close up to the *Belle Rose*, master? In five minutes you may, if you like, have yon black hound in your grip."

"Come you to the tiller now, Martin, and steer to within twenty yards of the *Belle Rose*, but no nearer unless I tell you."

So the two men changed places, and Ducie went forward with the glass in his hand. Cleon on his side was watching every movement on board the *Demoiselle*. Up to the present time the person of Captain Ducie had been in great part hidden by the sail, but now that he came forward he was plainly visible. The moment Cleon's glass showed him that stern, pale face, he fell back on his seat with an exclamation of terror, and seemed for a moment or two as one utterly paralysed. But the mulatto was by no means deficient in a sort of dogged animal courage, and the extremity of his peril left him no time for anything but immediate action. The two boats were now within fifty yards of each other, the *Demoiselle* bearing down like an arrow on the track of the *Belle Rose*. The mulatto took one more peep through his glass at Ducie. In the hand of the latter was an ugly-looking revolver.

Cleon could not doubt for what purpose it was intended, and he was too well acquainted with Ducie's undoubted skill with the weapon, having seen him practice with it several times at Bon Repos, not to know that his chance of life would hang on the merest thread if Ducie were once to pull the trigger. One look at the revolver was sufficient. Cleon spoke to the man at the tiller. The course of the boat was at once altered. The sail lost its wind, flapped for a moment or two against the mast like the broken wing of a bird, then caught the breeze on the opposite tack, and the *Belle Rose* coming sharply round through the hissing water turned her nose nearly due west and began to retrace the way she had come. Captain Ducie smiled grimly.

"If the cur thinks to escape me by going back to St. Helier and claiming the protection of the law, he will find himself mistaken. I will shoot him through the heart the moment his foot touches the pier."

Straight as a hawk after its quarry the *Demoiselle* at once followed up in the wake of the other boat. The *Demoiselle* had still some canvas to spare, and had she spread it, could easily have come up with the *Belle Rose*. But it was not Ducie's aim to do so.

Somewhat to Ducie's surprise, the *Belle Rose*, instead of turning northward and so making for the harbour of St. Helier, kept on her westerly course, and shot clean past the entrance, and so kept on till Elizabeth Castle was passed on the right, and both the boats found themselves skirting the outer edge of St. Aubin's Bay, and Noirmont

Point could be seen stretching out a rocky hand as if to bar their way. Ducie was puzzled, but said nothing. Could it be the mulatto's intention to skirt the western side of the island and make for Guernsey? But he would be no better off there than at Jersey. He, Ducie, would follow him to the very gates of perdition.

Martin's prediction had been verified. By this time the morning had clouded over, the wind was freshening, and a light, drizzling rain had begun to fall. It would be no pleasant voyage, truly, on such a day to cross the thirty miles of broken water between the two islands, and in so frail a craft. But what the *Belle Rose* dared do, that also dared the *Demoiselle*.

Noirmont Point was quickly passed, and soon St. Brelade's romantic Bay opened into view. Martin still steered, and Ducie still crouched like a wary sentinel in the fore part of the boat. The mulatto was no longer to be seen. He had probably stretched himself out at the bottom of the boat, dreading lest Ducie might take it into his head to fire. Why Ducie had not already fired was probably a source of surprise to him.

La Moye Point, which shuts in St. Brelade's Bay on the west, was neared and passed, and there, no great distance away, were the dread Corbière rocks wading out into the sea to entrap unwary mariners, smitten by the great waves and shrouding themselves in clouds of snowy spray. And now the head of the *Belle Rose* was turned northward, as if she were about to make for the shore. Ducie saw that the mulatto was about to take one of two courses: either to run full on the beach and so try to lose his pursuer among the rocks and caves which abound on that part of the island; or else to run his boat through some of the narrow and dangerous passages between the Corbières, on the chance of the *Demoiselle* not venturing to follow, and so gain sufficient headway by means of the short cut to render further pursuit hopeless. Ducie smiled to himself to think how futile the mulatto's efforts would be in either case.

It soon appeared that the hunted man had decided to take to the land as affording the best chance of escape. Close by was a small sandy nook that was sheltered between two protruding spurs of rock from the full swing of the tide. Into this tiny cove the *Belle Rose* shot with furled sail, and before her keel had fairly touched the sand, the mulatto was out of the boat and scrambling up the shelving beach with the agility of a tiger-cat. He just passed out of sight behind a broken fragment of rock as the *Demoiselle* shot round the spur and followed the *Belle Rose* into the little bay. Ducie pressed two sovereigns into the palm of Jean Martin and then leaped ashore. Cleon's footprints were plainly visible in the soft sand, and he followed them up with the instinct of a bloodhound.

## CHAPTER XLI.

## THE CAVE OF ST. LAZARE.

CAPTAIN DUCIE had one immense advantage over the man of whom he was in pursuit : he knew the Island thoroughly, having lived on it for several years when a boy at school. With that portion of it especially which stretches from St. Brelade on the south to Grève-de-Lecq on the north, he was intimately acquainted. Without much exaggeration it might be said that he knew every yard of the ground. Accordingly, when he had tracked the footprints of the mulatto to a point where the sandy beach ended and the shelving rock began, he troubled himself no further about them, but climbing straight up the face of the cliff with an agility that few men of his years could have imitated, he neither halted nor looked back till he had reached a small overhanging bluff that commanded the entire range of the precipice up which he had just clambered. This range of rock was only about a hundred yards in extent, and was shut in at the opposite end by another bluff which stretched out so far that its foot was already covered by the advancing tide.

From the smaller bluff, which Ducie had chosen as his eyrie, he could see every living thing larger than a rat that might move either along the sands or attempt to climb the rock. At the foot of this rock where it touched the sands there were several fissures large enough for two or three men to hide in. In addition to these there was a still larger opening, known as the Cave of St. Lazare. Now, it was quite evident to Ducie that the mulatto must be in hiding either in one of the minor fissures or in the cave itself, so that all he had to do was to wait patiently till Cleon should choose to quit his lair.

It is true that he might have gone down to the sands and have sought an encounter with the mulatto at close quarters. But he had an ugly recollection of Cleon's skill with the knife ; beside which he had something of that feeling which induces a cat to play with a mouse before finally putting it out of its misery. So he crept forward on his hands and knees over the wet grass to the edge of the bluff, and there ensconced himself behind a thick clump of brushwood whence he could see, without being seen, everything that might transpire on the sands.

His first care was to satisfy himself as to the condition of his revolver. When he had made his mind easy on that score, he took a pull at his brandy flask and munched a biscuit, but still keeping a wary watch for the faintest movement below.

The *Demoiselle* and the *Belle Rose* had disappeared already, those in charge of them being intent on getting back to St. Helier as quickly as possible, for the weather was threatening. A drizzling rain was still falling, and Ducie was by no means sorry that such was the case : no prying tourists would think of visiting the cave on such a day.

The grim Corbière rocks were lashing themselves with whips of spray, like monks doing penance, and a heavy tide was rolling rapidly in. The strip of sand at the foot of the rocks was growing narrower from minute to minute, and soon the whole of it would be hidden.

"He must come out of his den before long, if he does not wish to be drowned like a rat in its hole," muttered Ducie to himself, as he marked the creaming billows frothing up almost to the foot of the rock. "I shall not have long to wait."

In fact, only two courses were left open to the mulatto: either to show himself and climb the rock under cover of Ducie's revolver, or else to remain in hiding till the tide swept up and drowned him. From Ducie's post of vantage the narrow entrance to the cave—so narrow, that only one person could enter at a time—was clearly visible.

The advancing tide had completely swallowed up the strip of sand and was licking the foot of the precipice before the slightest sign of human life was discernible below. Ducie, crouching behind the bushes, with his hand on his revolver, and every nerve in his body on the alert, watched and waited in silence. The first thing that he saw was a yellow claw protruded from the interior of the cave. This claw grasped the edge of the rock, and next moment a yellow face was pushed out, the two terror-stricken, bloodshot eyes of which roved frantically around as in search of some unseen foe. But there was nothing to be seen save the inrushing tide, the barren rock above and around, and a clump of brushwood on the cliff bending before the wind. Apparently re-assured, he crept wholly out of hiding, and after another cautious look round, he turned his face to the cliff and began to climb. But he had not made more than two steps upward when the sudden ping of a pistol smote his ear, and the same instant a bullet struck the rock about two feet above his head, breaking off some fragments which rattled down into the sea. The mulatto gave utterance to a wild yell of terror, and losing his foothold, he slipped back into the water, which now reached up to his knees. Another moment and he had disappeared within the cave. Better run the risk of being drowned than again put himself in the way of that terrible revolver. It is doubtful whether he was aware that every high tide completely filled up the cavern. He may have thought that by climbing on to some of the higher ledges inside he would be safe till the subsidence of the water, by which time his enemy might probably be tired of waiting for him, or salvation might come in the shape of help from others. In any case, to venture outside the cave was certain death; to stop inside may have seemed to afford some chance of ultimate escape. But Ducie was well aware that to stop inside was certain death. When firing his revolver, his intention had been to frighten Cleon back into hiding, not to wound or kill him. It would be so much pleasanter if Cleon would allow himself to be quietly

drowned in the cave, instead of compelling him, Ducie, to put a bullet through his head. There might be people foolish enough to construe such a transaction as the one last named into wilful murder. The former could be put down as nothing more than an ugly accident.

So Ducie watched and waited, fully determined that by one mode or the other Cleon should that day come by his death. The tide rose higher and higher, but no yellow horror-stricken face was seen again outside the entrance to the cave. Then Ducie knew what would happen within. By-and-by the green lips of the waves kissed the roof of the doorway. Then Ducie knew that all was over, and that he had only to wait for the subsidence of the tide. He finished the brandy in his flask, and lighted a cigar, and waited.

It was considerably past mid-day before the water was low enough for him to venture into the cave. When he did venture in, the water came up to his waist. He waded slowly in, grasping the slippery rock carefully at each step that he took. He knew what he should find inside, and for the first time a feeling of awe crept over him. At length he stood in the middle of the cave and ventured to look round. A dim green light pervaded the place, too faint to discern anything that might be there. Ducie was not unprepared for such an emergency. He had brought with him a small box of the wax matches he sometimes used for lighting his cigar. He struck one of these on the bottom of the box and held it aloft. It burned for a minute, and that minute served to show him a black, shapeless heap of humanity lodged high up on one of the ledges of rock. To that spot the mulatto had climbed in the vain hope of escaping the ever-rising tide.

There was another ledge close to the one on which the body lay. On to this ledge Ducie climbed, and by kneeling on one knee and leaning over he could touch the dead man. He wanted to ascertain whether he had the Hara Diamond hidden anywhere about his person.

"What if he has swallowed it? What if he has thrown it into the sea?" Ducie asked himself. Then his hand touched the dead man's cheek, and he shuddered from head to foot.

He paused for a moment or two, and with an intense effort steadied his nerves to go through the task he had set himself to do. It was gone through carefully and thoroughly, but the Diamond was nowhere to be found. At length Ducie paused in sheer despair.

"He has evidently made away with the Diamond when he found that he could not escape, and so has carried his revenge beyond the grave," muttered Ducie.

Suddenly a thought struck him. Once more he bent over the dead man, and with both hands wrenched open his mouth. Another instant, and he had found the Diamond hidden away under the tongue that would never speak more.



Strong man though he was, the revulsion of feeling was almost more than he could bear. Tears of joy came into his eyes. He needed a minute or two to recover himself. As soon as his heart began to beat more calmly, he wrapped the Diamond in his handkerchief and stuffed the whole into an inner pocket of his waistcoat. Then he leaped down on to the sandy floor of the cave, and leaving the dead man on his rocky bed, he waded out by the way he had come ; and having breasted the hill, he set out at a sharp pace across the moorland on his way to St. Helier. His clothes had been soaked through and through in the course of the day, but just now he was not in a frame of mind to give any thought to such a trifle.

## CHAPTER XLII.

### THE VERDICT OF MR. VERMUSEN.

CAPTAIN DUCIE had a long, wet walk back to his hotel, and by the time he reached it he felt thoroughly exhausted. He had a bath and dined, and spent a quiet evening in the smoking-room, with no company save that of his own thoughts.

There was a deep underglow of satisfaction in his heart at recovering the Diamond, but there was one pressing question that required his immediate decision.

The body of the mulatto would in all probability be found on the morrow, or, at the latest, in the course of the following day. Although there could be little doubt that his death would be set down to pure accident, still an inquiry would be set on foot as to his name, position in life, etc., and the affair would be a nine days' wonder in the little island. The boatmen would naturally state that he, Captain Ducie, had been seen in the mulatto's company only a few hours before he came by his death ; justice, in the persons of a coroner and twelve jurymen, would take cognizance of the affair ; and he would be called upon to state the reason of his persistent pursuit of the mulatto, and what passed between them after landing at the Bay of St. Lazare. Such an inquiry would be distasteful to him in every way, and it seemed to him that the wisest thing he could do would be to start for England by the morning steamer. He would spend a couple of days in London, and then set out for Paris.

Once in the French capital, he must look out for some means of disposing of his Diamond. That was a negotiation which could not much longer be delayed.

His available funds were within a few sovereigns of being exhausted, and all his well-to-do friends had turned their backs on him long ago. But all his well-to-do friends might go hang. For the future he should be independent of them and their charity.

He would take up his permanent residence abroad : Continental

life was so much freer and more sociable than our cold-blooded, insular mode of wearing out existence.

He was still very sore on the subject of Mirpah Van Loal, and he would be so for some time to come. He winced mentally whenever her image crossed his mind. His self-love had been terribly wounded by her desertion of him; but beyond that there was an element of mystery about the sudden disappearance of herself and her father that puzzled him exceedingly.

Change of scene might be beneficial to him in more senses than one: he had better get away from the island as soon as possible.

He called for his bill and settled it, so that it might not delay his departure in the morning, after which his balance of ready money was reduced to a trifle. He must raise a few sovereigns on his watch when he got to London, otherwise he would hardly have sufficient to take him across the Channel.

As the clock struck ten, he took his bed-candle and went upstairs. He put back the Diamond in the place from which it had been taken by the mulatto—that is to say, in the seal-skin pouch that hung by a steel chain round his neck.

Before getting into bed he did not fail to subject his room to a careful examination, nor to satisfy himself as to the security of his door. He was terribly tired, and in five minutes after putting his head on the pillow he was soundly asleep.

He awoke all in a moment.

The night-lamp in his room, burning dim and low, just served to show that all was still dark outside. He awoke all in a moment, with the terribly vivid sensation of a cold wet hand laid heavily across his mouth. He started up in bed with a shudder that shook him from head to foot. He expected to see something near him—what, he could not have told.

The sight of the familiar features of his own room swept away his fright at once, but he could not quite so readily get over the sensation of sickness and disgust which affected him as deeply as if the hand had been a real one. His lips felt dry and parched, and he put out his tongue to wet them.

Again he shuddered. His lips tasted of salt water—tasted as if he had been drinking sea-water, and had allowed the salt to dry on them.

The hand that had been laid across his face was cold and wet, and smelled of the sea.

He leapt out of bed, feeling utterly upset. On looking at his watch he found that it was just four o'clock. There would be no daylight for another hour.

"Serve me right for eating that lobster," he said. "A man at my time of life has no business with suppers of any kind. If people will trifle with their digestive organs, they must expect to suffer for their folly."

He did not get into bed again, not caring to risk a repetition of that terrible sensation. Instead, he wrapped himself in a warm overcoat, selected a comfortable chair, lighted his meerschaum, and smoked away till day had fairly broken, and it was time to wash and dress in readiness for the steamer.

He was turning over some toilet appurtenances when his eye caught the corner of a letter protruding from under the looking-glass. He drew it out and found that it was addressed to himself, and that it bore the London post-mark. It had doubtless been laid on the table with the view of catching his eye, and then by some accident had got slipped under the glass. He opened it with some curiosity, saw that it was in a man's writing, and then glanced at the signature before beginning to read it.

The colour mounted into his cheek as he read the signature, "Solomon Van Loal," and with eager curiosity he turned back to the beginning.

The letter began without either date or address, and ran as under:—

"SIR,—The most cunning people are apt to deceive themselves at times, and few people are so easily gulled, when their suspicions are not aroused, as those who make a point of preying upon others. You, sir, in your own person, afford a conspicuous example of the truth of the above remarks.

"In extreme cases, where, for instance, a great wrong has to be righted, it sometimes becomes necessary to fight Fraud with its own weapons. If it is smitten, shall it cry out? If it is outwitted and compelled to disgorge its ill-gotten gains, shall it make a noise in the market-place? Let it rather fold its cloak decently about its head and go on its way in silence, thankful that its shoulders have escaped the whip of justice for a little while longer.

"I speak in no unmeaning parables, Captain Ducie. More underlies my words than may at first sight appear. If you do not understand my meaning when you read this, you will not long remain in ignorance of it.

"One word of warning in conclusion. Much of that which you believe to be locked up in your own bosom is known to me in all its details. There are certain episodes, having reference to your sojourn at Bon Repos, which you would hardly care to have made public. Take the advice of him who writes this letter and keep a discreet tongue in your head, otherwise you will make an implacable enemy of one who can work you more harm than you are aware of, and who now signs himself,

"Yours as you may prove to deserve it,

"SOLOMON VAN LOAL."

"What, in the fiend's name, does it all mean?" asked Captain Ducie, when he had read to the end of the letter. "Is the man

mad, or am I drunk?" His face was very white, but there was an ugly frown on it as he sat staring at the letter as if he could hardly believe it to be anything more than a foolish hoax. "By heaven! if I had the writer of it here I would twist his neck, old as he is!"

Then he read the letter carefully through again, weighing it sentence by sentence. When he had done, he put it back into its envelope and looked up with quite a frightened expression in his eyes.

"What does the old fool mean by 'fighting Fraud with its own weapons?' and by 'compelling me to disgorge my ill-gotten gains?' In what way has he 'gulled' me? He has taken nothing of mine, unless ——"

He was too sick at heart to finish the sentence, even to himself, but with a hand that trembled like that of an old man, he drew forth his seal-skin sachet, opened it, and took out of it the Hara Diamond. He took it out with the thumb and forefinger of his right hand and laid it on the palm of his left. There it rested, lustrous, glowing, unmatched, absorbing the purest rays of the morning into itself, and then flinging them back intensified a thousandfold. The colour came back to Captain Ducie's cheek, his heart resumed its equable beating and nothing save an almost imperceptible trembling of the hand betrayed the crisis of feeling through which he had just passed.

"What a precious idiot I must be to allow myself to be frightened by the riddles of an old ass like Van Loal! The fellow must be crazy. No doubt he felt an attack coming on, and that was the reason why he left so abruptly. And so enough of him. Not even for the fair Mirpah's sake could I tolerate a lunatic father-in-law. Ah! my beauty," apostrophising the Diamond, "so long as I have you, or the worth of you, what care I how the world wags? You are my only true consolation—my only real friend! Come, *amigo mio*, let you and I, for the benefit and information of such persons as may tenant this chamber in time to come, write down Mr. Solomon Van Loal an ass. On the middle pane of the middle window, in prominent letters, we will write him down an ass."

The conceit pleased him, and he crossed the floor with the Diamond in his hands and a malicious smile on his lips to work out his poor morsel of revenge. He selected the spot with care, right in the centre of the middle pane. He gave a preliminary flourish with his hand and was about to make the first stroke, but paused. "I'll put my initials, E. D., under it," he said, and the malicious smile deepened as he spoke, "so that if the old rascal ever comes here again he may know to whom he is indebted for his brief immortality."

Then he gave his arm a second flourish, and essayed the first stroke.

With one of the facets of the Diamond he made the first curve of the letter S. But no mark followed.

Again he essayed to make the stroke, and again the glass remained as free from scratch or mark as if he had striven to write on it with

a common quill. A mist came over his eyes, and he sank, half-fainting, into the nearest chair.

"Ruined! irretrievably ruined!" he cried aloud in a voice of utter anguish. "That consummate villain has stolen the real Diamond, and has left me a worthless imitation in its place! Now—now I understand his letter. Now I understand why I was befooled by his daughter."

The worthless gem had dropped from his fingers and lay unheeded on the floor. He sat staring at it with lack-lustre eyes for a full half-hour. All his patience, his ingenuity, his underhand working—the death of Platzoff, the stealing of the Diamond, the murder of Cleon—had ended in this: that he had been outwitted by one more cunning than himself. And could he complain that he had been otherwise than rightly punished for what he had done? But he did not complain. Hope had died out utterly in his heart; and when that is the case with anyone, he is beyond vain repinings. The future? He dared not look at it. The dull, dead present was quite as much as his brain could dwell on just now.

He rose after a while and picked up the Diamond; and going to the window, he again essayed with one facet after another to make even the faintest scratch on the glass. But his latter efforts were as futile as his first had been. Then the thought struck him, and it was a thought that sent a brief glow of hope to his heart, that there might, perhaps, be something peculiar in the cutting of the Diamond which precluded it from marking the window; that its angles might be too much rounded, or something of that sort. The only way by which he could satisfy himself whether he had been duped or no—whether the Diamond was a real or an imitation one—was to take it to someone thoroughly conversant with such things, and obtain his verdict thereon. Even while this thought was in his mind, it came into his memory that he had seen a quaint little shop, in a certain out-of-the-way street in St. Helier, with this legend painted over the window: *H. Vermusen, Lapidary and Dealer in Precious Stones*. He remembered it from thinking at the time he might, perchance, call some day on Mr. Vermusen, and show him the Diamond.

To this man he would at once go. These alternations of hope and fear were killing him. He would put off his departure from the island till to-morrow. Even if Cleon's body had been already found, it would take more than another day to so complete the chain of evidence as to bring home the fact that he, Ducie, had been in any way concerned in the mulatto's death. He was safe for another twenty-four hours.

He looked at his watch. Time had flown rapidly. It was now a quarter-past six. Would the lapidary's shop be open at that early hour? Hardly. He would finish dressing, and go out on to the sands, and there wait till the clock should strike eight.

As the church clock struck eight, Captain Ducie opened the door

of Mr. Vermusen's shop. Mr. Vermusen himself came out of a dark inner den to wait upon his early visitor. A spectacled, high-nosed old gentleman, in a black velvet skull-cap, and a faded velvet dressing-gown.

"In what can I have the pleasure of serving you, sir?" he asked with a slow rubbing of his lean hands and a sharp glance over his spectacles at Captain Ducie's pale, haughty face."

Ducie had thoroughly made up his mind during his solitary walk along the sands to bear whatever the diamond-merchant might have to tell him, whether it were good news or bad, without any outward tokens either of elation or dismay. When, therefore, he answered Mr. Vermusen's question his voice was even more low and equable than usual, but he could not altogether hide the anxiety that lurked in his eyes.

"You are a lapidary and dealer in precious stones, I believe?"

Mr. Vermusen bowed.

"I have here an object—a something—the value of which I wish to ascertain. It was found a few days ago by a sister of mine at the bottom of an old oak chest that had not been opened for quite forty years. The chest was full of old family papers—leases, title deeds, what not—none of which had been needed for a very long time. Having occasion, however, to look for some missing document, the chest was emptied, and, as already said, this article was found at the bottom. My sister has sent it to me with the view of ascertaining its value."

While speaking, the thumb and finger of his right-hand had been inserted in his waistcoat pocket. They now brought out the Hara Diamond (or its imitation) and dropped it gently into the skinny palm of the old lapidary. A low sigh which he could not repress told with what anxiety Captain Ducie awaited the verdict of Mr. Vermusen.

Grave and immovable as a judge, the diamond-dealer received the glittering gem in his palm. A moment he looked at it through his spectacles; then by a gentle up and down movement of his hand he seemed to be testing its weight as in comparison with its size. Then he fixed a small microscope in his eye and surveyed the facets carefully through it. Then he put it in his mouth and rolled his tongue round it three or four times. Lastly, he put it into a pair of tiny brass scales and weighed it. Then he looked up and spoke.

"Paste, sir—paste," was all he said.

There was a chair close by where Captain Ducie was standing. He sank into it, as it seemed without any volition on his part. For a few moments he did not speak. Then he said very quietly: "You are quite sure that it is nothing more than paste?"

The old lapidary's thick white eyebrows went up in quiet disdain. "I am not in the habit, sir, of making assertions which I cannot maintain by proof," he said drily. "With your permission, and by



the aid of this little file, I will prove to you in a still more effectual way that I have stated nothing more than a simple fact."

"Thanks. No. I ask your pardon for seeming to doubt your word. I am satisfied." He paused, and Mr. Vermusen looked as if he thought the interview ought to end there. But presently Captain Ducie spoke again.

"I presume that you are a dealer in all sorts of gems, both real and fictitious. Have you any objection to purchase this one of me at your own price?"

"Such a purchase would be of no use whatever to me. Your gem is too large for setting either as a genuine stone or an imitation one, and to break it up would be to render it still more worthless than it is now. I must decline to purchase it at any price."

Captain Ducie put the glittering impostor back into his pocket. Then he rose, lifted his hat, bade Mr. Vermusen a courteous good-morning, and so quitted the shop without another word.

When he got into the street he hesitated for a moment or two which way he should turn. But all ways were now alike to him. Instinctively he took the road leading to the sea.

As he reached the bottom of the street, a heavy, broad-wheeled waggon, laden with stone, was on the point of turning the corner. A sudden impulse came into his mind, and he acted on it without giving himself time for a second thought. He took the Diamond out of his pocket, stooped down, and placed it full in the track of the waggon wheel. With indrawn breath and tense muscles he stood watching the ponderous wheel roll slowly forward. One more turn, and the Diamond was hidden for ever. A faint crunching noise, a tiny heap of glittering dust, and all was over. With a sigh and a shrug of the shoulders, Captain Ducie went his way.

## CHAPTER XLIII.

### HAUNTED.

FOR full three hours Captain Ducie wandered by the lonely shore. A train of wild and incoherent thoughts, like torn fragments of clou in a windy sky, chased each other brokenly across his mind. On thought alone—to which all the rest were subsidiary—found a permanent resting-place in his mind, shutting in the horizon of his life on every side as with a sombre pall. It was the thought—or rather, the knowledge—that he was irretrievably ruined.

In the common parlance of the world he had been "ruined" twice before. But on both those occasions he had had something to fall back upon: rich relations, powerful friends; a windfall, on one occasion, from a wealthy aunt who happened to die just at the time when her cash was most needed; and under all, at the bottom of the casket, had lain youth and hope. But now! Well: his relations

were hopelessly alienated ; one by one his powerful friends had all turned their backs on him ; his character, like an old piece of electro-plate, would have looked all the brighter for a little polishing : he was without money, without youth, without hope. Work he could not, and to beg he was ashamed. Such being the case, what was there left for him but to throw up the sponge, cry quits, and go under as soon as possible ?

The clear, bright morning had settled down into a raw, drizzling day. Captain Ducie paced the sands for full three hours, heedless of the wet and cold. Then he went into the town and pawned his watch for ten sovereigns. Thence he wandered back to the hotel. He could not eat, but the power of drinking was still left him. He had a fire lighted in his bedroom and ordered up a bottle of cognac. He was ill, not only mentally but bodily. He was suffering from the reaction consequent on the excitement of the last few days. But it was more than any common reaction—it was the dull, dead apathy of one who sees himself hopelessly cut off from all that makes life worth the having. In addition to this, as the day went on, he began to suffer from the first symptoms of a sort of low fever brought on by the severe cold he had caught during his many hours' exposure on the cliffs while hunting down the mulatto. His head ached, his eyes throbbed, all his pulses seemed to be on fire. But to deaden the still more weary ache at his heart he kept on resorting, every now and again, to the bottle of cognac by his bedside. For he had gone to bed as soon as his fire was lighted, and there he lay all through the dreary afternoon and the still drearier evening, and till far into the night, tossing and turning from side to side, courting the sleep that would not come.

But it came to him at last. He had counted the weary chimes one after another till now midnight was here. In the act of counting the twelve strokes as they were doled out slowly one by one from some near-at-hand church, he sank off quietly to sleep, and for a little while both head and heart were at rest.

He had slept for some two hours or more when suddenly he started up in bed with precisely the same sensation that had awakened him the night before—the sensation of a cold, wet hand pressed heavily across his mouth and nostrils so as utterly to stop his breathing. As before, he woke up in the most extreme terror and with great drops of agony on his brow. Instinctively he put out his tongue and passed it across his lips. Again he fancied that he could detect upon them the taste of sea-water. For him, that night, there was no more sleep.

The fever still held him like a burning vice. He lay tossing and groaning in its hot embrace, looking ever with impatient eyes for the dawn that was so long in coming. It came at last, as all things come in their turn. Then Captain Ducie rose, washed and dressed. Despite his illness, he was thoroughly bent on quitting the island by

that morning's boat. He hungered to be back in England, in London, among the busy haunts of men. The terrible Hand which had broken his sleep for two nights in succession would hardly follow him into the heart of London. There he would lie by till he was better, mentally and bodily, and could afford to face the gloomy future with some degree of manly fortitude. He had known fellows as utterly bankrupt and ruined as he was, who had yet managed to survive their difficulties, seeming, indeed, to float none the less gaily along the stream of life, although they might not have a sovereign to call their own. He had relations, rich and many, who had one and all declared that if he were begging his bread they would turn him empty from their doors; but now that the grim reality was so near, when begging his bread would soon be his only portion unless help were granted him by someone, they would surely concert together, and, were it only for the sake of the family credit, would arrange amongst themselves a life pittance for him, on which, in some quiet Continental nook where there was good scenery and good society, he might vegetate not unpleasantly for the remainder of his days.

He went down to breakfast, but could not touch a morsel, although he had not tasted food since the day before yesterday. A close carriage took himself and his luggage to the steamer. The morning was cold, wet, and stormy, with a nasty cross sea. He was not displeased to find that very few passengers were going over. He wanted to be as much alone as possible. The fever that had parched him up all night had now been succeeded by a chill that made his teeth chatter, and caused him to tremble in every limb. He went below deck and lay down in a berth and got the steward to heap a lot of wraps about him, and to bring him some hot brandy, but for a long time he felt as if he should never be warm again. All his life he had been a good sailor, he never remembered having been sea-sick. But to-day the boat had hardly got clear of the harbour before he was attacked. By the time the steamer reached Guernsey he had little or no power of volition left in him. He beckoned to his friend the steward. "Let me be put ashore here," he whispered. "I will wait for fairer weather before going on."

So he was carried ashore by three or four stalwart sailors, and deposited in a fly, and driven off to the hotel "*Pomme d'Or*." He was exceedingly ill, and he went off to bed at once. The people at the hotel wanted to have a doctor called in, but he would not hear of such a thing. It was only that confounded *mal-de-mer*, he said, and he should be better in the morning.

But he was not better in the morning. If anything, rather worse.

Again he was woke up in the middle of the night by feeling a wet hand laid across his mouth. This persistent disturbance of his sleep, together with the very want of sleep itself, was beginning to tell upon his nerves. When was the terrible persecution to end

The sensation was so horrible as utterly to banish sleep for the time being, and again he lay tossing to and fro, waiting with impatient eyes for the dawn. About eight he rose and made a show of eating some breakfast. After breakfast he sat in his easy-chair before the fire, and while thus sitting he felt a sweet drowsiness steal through all his limbs. It was broad daylight now, and with the darkness some portion of the fear inspired by the Hand had vanished. He could almost afford to smile at his fright of the last three nights. In any case, he let the drowsiness have its way, and so in three minutes more he was fast asleep before the fire.

But he had not been more than ten minutes asleep when he was disturbed in precisely the same way that he had been disturbed before. And, if his senses did not deceive him, he heard the echo of a low malignant laugh close at the back of his chair. He stared round half expecting to see he knew not what. But every nook and corner of the room was plainly visible. There was no one there but himself. He shuddered from head to foot, and sank back in his chair, and burst into tears.

To-day the weather was even stormier than yesterday: a higher wind, more rain. He was not hurried for time, and to cross either to Southampton or Weymouth in the condition in which he then was, would be sheer madness. He would have medical advice while thus laid up in ordinary at the "*P<sup>o</sup>mm<sup>e</sup> d'Or*," and would get cured of his cold, and have an opium mixture to make him sleep, and would wait for fairer weather and a gentler sea before attempting to continue his voyage. If he could only recover the lost tone of his nerves, he felt thoroughly convinced that he should never more be haunted by that nightmare Hand.

Captain Ducie had always held the whole tribe of doctors in abhorrence. He had not been under the hands of one of the brotherhood for more than twenty years, and nothing could have been more strongly indicative of the state to which he was now reduced, than the fact of his determining of his own free will to call in medical advice. He was, in very truth, wretchedly ill, thoroughly woe-begone.

The doctor came, saw him, listened to what he had to say, and prescribed. Ducie entered into no details as to the mode in which his sleep was broken. He merely said that he was unable to get his proper rest in consequence of being so frequently troubled with nightmare, and he begged of the doctor to provide him with a powerful opiate. Medicine came: two bottles: one for the improvement of his cold, the second to be taken just before getting into bed.

Ducie spent a doleful day enough. He had no heart left to read either a newspaper or a magazine, and the very thought of a cigar turned him sick. This latter he regarded as a very bad sign. "When a fellow gets past his smoke, he's not of much account in this world," he said to himself, with a sigh. Still, he did not fail to

derive some grains of comfort that with the assistance of his friend the doctor he should succeed in cheating that terrible nightmare which seemed bent on slowly pressing his life out an inch at a time.

He waited with desperate patience without any further attempt at sleep till he heard the people below stairs shutting up the hotel for the night. Then he got into bed, and marking off, with his forefinger on the bottle, a dose and a half of the draught, he swallowed it more gratefully than he had ever swallowed the choicest wine, and then lay down.

Hardly, as it seemed to him, had his head touched the pillow before a delicious languor stole through all his limbs, and with a half turn over to the other side, he was gone.

He was gone, and in a deeper sleep, probably, than he had ever been in before. But it was a sleep that did not last above an hour. At the end of that time it was broken precisely as it had been broken before. Only, this time, as if on account of his being so soundly asleep and therefore more difficult to arouse, he seemed closer to the point of actual suffocation than he had been before. He gasped for breath, and gurgled in his throat, and the veins of his forehead stood out thick and blue as though the circulation were on the point of being violently stopped for ever. Again his returning senses seemed to catch the sound of a low mocking laugh, and again there was the taste of salt water on his lips.

His terror this time on awaking was, if such a thing were possible, more extreme than it had ever been before, inasmuch as he felt that he had been closer to the verge of death. "Another half-minute, and I should have been gone past recovery," he said to himself as he wiped the great drops of agony off his brow. "Devil!" he muttered aloud—"yellow-skinned son of the bottomless pit, so this is your revenge, is it?" There was a sort of stony despair in his set, colourless face, but a wild, almost insane defiance flashed from the hollow caverns of his eyes. "You may win the day, perhaps: I cannot help that," he cried. "But the victory shall be in my fashion—not in yours!"

From that moment he seemed to accept the fate which he saw looming before him as a foregone conclusion from which it was impossible to escape.

Unconsciously to himself, perhaps, he was somewhat of a fatalist in his ideas: the maxim, that "What is to be, must be," was one that was often in his mind if seldom on his lips. He felt like one of those doomed beings whose tragic woes the Greek dramatists loved to sing; he was pursued by a shadowy Nemesis, from whose relentless grasp there was no escape. He could only bow his head in silence and submit.

He got out of bed and made himself some chocolate, and sat brooding over the fire for the remainder of the night.

Two or three times he fell off into a broken dose, which lasted for

only a few minutes each time, and each time his slumber was broken by the menace rather than the reality of the terrible Hand.

The access of terror through which he had passed early in the night had the effect of rendering him comparatively callous to these minor visitations. Still they all had their effect in helping to wear him out, both in body and mind.

After breakfast—which with him was a mere pretence of a meal—he ordered up pens, ink and paper, and sat down to write.

With a few intervals of rest, he kept on writing through the day, and did not finish till an hour after candles had been brought up. He put what he had written into two different envelopes, which he sealed up and addressed. Then he burned several old letters which lay at the bottom of his despatch box, and, lastly, he took a long, brown, silky ringlet, which he had not looked at for years, from its resting-place in a tiny satin-lined case, and after pressing it passionately two or three times to his lips, he dropped that, too, into the fire. After that he sat for a full hour gazing with sorrowful eyes into the smouldering embers, without stirring a limb.

The doctor had called about noon, whereupon Ducie had assured him that he had passed an excellent night, and felt himself very much better than on the previous day.

The medico looked rather dubious, but could not get over his patient's assurances that he was rapidly improving. Indeed, to-night, after he rose from his seat by the fire and began to pace his room, there was a brightness in his eyes, and an amount of energy in his manner, that might have deceived an inexperienced person into thinking that the morrow would find him perfectly recovered.

A little later on he took a bath and perfumed himself, and ordered up a choice supper, of which he partook with more appetite than he had shown for several days past. Then he began to prepare for bed.

But before retiring for the night, he dived deep into his portmanteau and fished up from its depths a long, thin Damascus dagger of blue steel, with an inlaid haft. He wiped it carefully and felt its point, smiling cynically the while, and then he laid it on the little table by his bedside.

He was soon asleep, but only to be awakened a couple of hours later, as he had been awakened before, by the pressure of a cold wet hand across his mouth and nostrils, and by feeling that he was on the verge of suffocation. It took him two or three minutes to recover his equanimity. Then he got out of bed, put on his dressing-gown, lighted the candles, and wheeled an easy-chair up to the fire.

The wind was roaring down the chimneys of the hotel and shaking the windows, and he could hear the heavy dashing of the sea against the granite walls of the pier.

A wild, eerie night—a night on which the spirits of the dead might easily be supposed to come forth and wander round the places they had loved best on earth.



Captain Ducie drew the little table close up to his easy-chair, and then sat down before the fire and rested his feet on the fender. On the table were a bottle of cognac, a wineglass, and the "bare bodkin" with the inlaid haft.

It may be recollected that after George Strickland obtained Captain Ducie's address from the porter at the Piebalds Club, he telegraphed to Major Strickland at Eastbury. The reply to his message was a request that he would proceed to Jersey without delay, and there, if possible, bring his search to a definite conclusion.

On reaching St. Helier, he went at once to the "Royal George," and inquired for Captain Ducie. In reply he was told that Captain Ducie had left by the Southampton boat four days previously. George was excessively chagrined, for he had quite made up his mind that he should find Ducie at St. Helier. All that he could now do was to go back to London and there wait till a fresh address should be sent by Ducie to the Piebalds, and then follow him up from that point. So he stayed that night at the "Royal George," and started for England by next morning's steamer.

He was standing on the bridge of the steamer, gazing on what looked like a bank of cloud in the distance, but which someone had told him was Guernsey, when the captain and one of the passengers came up and halted close by him. They were talking earnestly together, and George heard the name of Captain Ducie twice mentioned by the captain. He moved away out of earshot till the two men separated. Then he went up to the captain.

"I accidentally heard you mention the name of Captain Ducie," he said. "May I ask whether you are acquainted with that gentleman, and whether you can tell me his present address?"

"I am not acquainted with the gentleman in question," said the captain, "but I can tell you his present address. If you choose to inquire at the 'Pomme d'Or,' in St. Peter's, you will find him lying there, stark dead, stabbed to the heart by his own hand."

George was inexpressibly shocked. In answer to his question, the captain supplied him with these further particulars: Ducie had been stopping at the "Pomme d'Or" for the last two or three days, very much out of health. He had been seen by a doctor, who had pronounced him to be suffering from a species of low fever, brought on through having contracted a severe cold; his nerves, too, seemed to be very much shaken and out of order. There seemed nothing, however, but what a few days' rest, with due attention to the doctor's prescriptions, would have set right. Yesterday morning, on being called, there was no answer, and on the door being forced, Ducie was found dead, having evidently stabbed himself some time in the night with a small dagger that was found on the ground not far away.

George landed at Guernsey, and hurried up to the "Pomme d'Or," where every particular which the captain had given him was confirmed.

It was clearly proved that the act must have been premeditated, seeing that the uppermost thing in the dead man's writing-desk was a slip of paper, on which was written a request that in case of anything happening to himself his cousin, the Honourable Egerton Dacre, should at once be communicated with. This request had been complied with before George reached the hotel, so he made up his mind to await the arrival of Mr. Dacre, and detail to him the circumstances which had led to his taking such an interest in the fate of Captain Ducie.

The Hon. Mr. Dacre arrived in due course, and after the funeral was over, George introduced himself, and told his story.

"It is just the sort of thing Ned would be likely to do," said Mr. Dacre; "to contract a secret marriage," and afterwards to separate from his wife. I am, however, pleased to find that the lady to whom he gave his name came of so excellent a family. As regards his daughter, I know of no reason why she should not be received as such by all of us. I am sure my mother will be delighted to find that Ned has left a child whom she may acknowledge without a blush. Of course you are aware that Ducie has died as poor as a rat, so that in the way of worldly goods the young lady must not expect anything from our side of the house, unless she be in want of a home, in which case we will gladly welcome her. I must, however, lay the whole case before Ned's elder brother, with whom, as being the head of that branch of the family, the settlement of all future details must rest.

Such were the tidings that Captain George Strickland took back with him to Eastbury.

*(To be concluded).*



## THE TROUBADOURS.

By J. F. ROWBOTHAM, AUTHOR OF "A HISTORY OF MUSIC."

PROVENCE and Languedoc seem to invite to poetry and song.

The serenity of the climate, the picturesque beauty of the landscapes, which were said "to sleep in superfluity of verdure," the silver lacing of thousands of tiny rivers, and above all the thick carpet of wild flowers which enamels everywhere the soil—these are features of loveliness that are extant even to-day. But yet more enchanting was the place in days of yore.

"In our land of Provence," says an old mediæval writer, "the birds sing so sweetly, the breezes make such melody, and the mere tinkling of the waterfalls is so harmonious that I wonder the very peasant boys do not break forth into singing at every step they take, from blithe companionship with the nature around them."

It was here that towards the close of the twelfth century the Troubadours were keeping their mimicry of chivalry; and, with a strange fidelity to all the rites and usages of feudal knighthood, contrived by a soft inversion to make music do the duty of arms.

The Seigneurs of Provence, for such in every case the Troubadours were, had not been led to their idyllic theory of life by effeminacy or by the indolent device of shirking a martial career. So far as feats of arms were concerned, they might boast as fair a schedule as any other knights of that day in Europe could show. They were all obliged to pass the three orders of chivalry and to evince their courage by some sufficient exploit, before they were allowed by their brethren to settle down to peace and music in Provence as "Doctors of the Gay Science" and "Most Redoubtable Companions of the Golden Violet"—for by such fantastic terms did they dub their fraternity. But then, the necessary training of a gentleman over, they began their strange life in earnest—and surely such a quaint *mélange* of serious art, fanciful folly and romantic adventure has never existed in history, nor can exist again.

During the winter, the Troubadour passed his time in his castle, varying his leisure with the composition of songs and the training of his attendant squires, or *jongleurs*, in the practice of musical instruments.

For unlike the squires of other knights, those of the Troubadour were chosen solely for their skill in music, and were mostly the itinerant minstrels of the time, known as *jongleurs*, who were engaged, often at very high fees, to act as accompanists.

When the first breath of spring appeared, the Troubadour sallied from his castle "to go a-courting," as the phrase was—that is to say, to play the knight-errant during the whole forthcoming year, with this

sole difference from the usual method, that his feats were to be achieved by music and not by arms. Mounted on his steed, and abandoning himself to delightful contemplation, he gave the reins to the horse and let it carry him where it list, while his jongleurs, on foot in the rear, tuning up their instruments, sang out their master's songs, that echoed through the meadows and woods as they passed along.

In due time they would reach a castle, whither a jongleur had already been despatched in front to notify the Troubadour's coming.

Such visits were common in Provence, and were expected as almost daily occurrences throughout the greater part of the year. Two hundred Troubadours were thus entertained in one year by the Seigneur de Cavaillon, and this was not thought by any means an extraordinary number.

The reception at the castle gates was most ceremonious. The ladies of the castle assisted the Troubadour to dismount from his steed, and divested him of his armour, for being a knight bachelor he always rode in panoply.

During these proceedings, the jongleurs, ranging themselves in a row before the company, began the preface to a concert, which was to continue almost without intermission during the whole of the visit. Arrayed in a costly mantle, he was then led to the banqueting hall; and after dinner carpets of brocade were spread on the grass in the meadows outside the castle, and the ladies having all assembled there, the Troubadour began to sing. How often he did so was entirely at his own option, as it was a point of etiquette never to solicit him.

The same reserve did not obtain in relation to his squires, for they were constantly requested to furnish music to the company, and their duty was as constantly to comply. The next day our musical errand would bring his visit to a conclusion, and proceed on his wanderings, either to stop at the next château he came to or to follow up any adventure that may have occurred on his way.

One great duty that the profession of Troubadour imposed on its votary was a regular attendance at the Courts of Love.

These strange assemblages were tribunals presided over by the ladies of the district, whose office was to investigate all disputes between husbands and wives or petulant lovers, and to decide any speculative questions in connection with love-making that might be submitted to them.

In these Courts the Troubadours played the part of barristers, and were engaged by the contending disputants to plead their respective causes, not for high fees as with us, but merely for the pleasure of serving distressed beauty or suffering manhood.

Despite the fanciful character of the Courts of Love, the proceedings were entirely au sérieux; and the juries of ladies held in their hands the happiness or misery of most of the homes in Provence.

Some of the issues submitted to them will amuse us. The Seigneur de Beauclercque summoned his lady before the Court of

his district, because she had feloniously opened a billet-doux intended for his hand alone, and had rated him soundly because the contents were not to her liking. The Court decided that her scolding would have been justifiable if she had administered it from suspicions of the handwriting on the outside of the missive; but that directly she opened the letter, she stood in the light of the recipient, and ought to have observed the same secrecy which her husband would doubtless have taken care to maintain had he received the letter safely.

One celebrated case was as follows.

It was argued before the Court of the Ladies of Gascony: Three Seigneurs of Provence, Savari de Mauléon, the Seigneur de Bergerac, and Geoffrey Rudel had been on a visit to the Vicomtesse de Gavaret. She had held out hopes of her undivided affection to each of them separately beforehand, and on the occasion of their visiting her together had the address to content all three at one and the same moment. She gazed rapturously at Geoffrey Rudel, and simultaneously pressed tenderly the hand of the Seigneur de Bergerac, and with her foot pressed the foot of Savari de Mauléon.

The object of the litigation was to decide who had received the greatest favour.

Geoffrey Rudel, who had received the amorous gaze, maintained that the pressure of the hand was a mere courtesy, the touch of the foot might be an accident, but that a look arises from the soul.

The Seigneur de Bergerac, whose hand had been pressed, insisted that the look was of no consequence, since kind looks are given to all; the touch of the foot was no great intimacy, because the foot was covered; but when a white hand without glove presses tenderly your own, it is a sign that genuine love is present.

With still more convincing eloquence did Savari de Mauléon defend the foot—and the ladies after a long debate decided in his favour.

The Courts were held either in the castle halls or in the meadow of the tilting-ground, but more generally in the former. Fifty or sixty ladies were impanelled as the jury, and they sat on a horseshoe daïs overlooking the spacious floor, which was arranged in the manner of an arena, with tiers of seats at the end for spectators. In the arena stood the contending Troubadours, with their guitars, facing each other, and behind them the ladies or gentlemen whose cause they championed. The entire pleading was managed in music.

"For first," says a contemporary chronicler, describing the proceedings, "the Troubadour who laid the charge touched the strings of his guitar and lisped off the indictment in the sweetest music, which he had either prepared beforehand, or else with the skill which was so common among these brave gentlemen, extemporised his verses and his tunes as he went on. Then the advocate of the defendant replied, and similarly in verses and melody. Then the first retorted again, and so they proceeded, each endeavouring to

outdo the other in the sweetness of his singing and the beauty of his expression—nay! of so much importance were these arts considered that often the best singer, though he had the worst case, would win."

We may take it that never before nor since then has music ever succeeded in becoming so consummate a medium of expression as this account points to.

Music with the Troubadours seems to have lost entirely its character of a deliberate art, and to have passed into a natural style of utterance which they preferred to any other for giving vent to their feelings and their thoughts. Not only in times of ease and enjoyment did it serve them perfectly in such a function, but in moments of danger, in battles and sieges—since such things did occur to mar their beautiful life—when the bravest might well have sunk to common speech, we still hear of the Troubadours speaking the language of music.

At the sieges of Carcassone and Toulouse, "the leading knights, who were some of the greatest of the Troubadours, stood on the ramparts amid the hail of darts, encouraging by war-songs the panic-stricken soldiers." And at the battle of Muret, in which most of the Provençal nobility engaged, "they marched in bodies about the field," says the chronicler, "fighting and singing; and as their songs grew fainter, so might we know that many gallant hearts were falling, but when the melody rose clear and strong in the air amid the clashing of arms all round, then were we assured that victory smiled in that quarter of the field."





## A MODERN INCIDENT.

THE wind was rising and the Captain's temper had risen, yet the *Anna Maria* was but just started on her voyage, which practically begins with the departure of the pilot.

Now the pilot was no sooner out of hail, and thus the last land-link severed until the *Anna Maria* should reach her destination in foreign parts, than a most annoying discovery was brought to the Captain's notice. None other than a stowaway, grabbed out by the cook from behind the flour-barrels.

A stunted, wizened, miserable larrikin, who would have been sea-sick but that terror for the moment overmastered him; on whose skeleton limbs hung the frowsy remnants of other vagrants' clothing; down whose dirty cheeks trickled tears which were rubbed and kneaded away with dirtier hands.

The cook held him fast by one ear as he explained to the Captain how he had found him; and the Captain's majestic figure towered over both, while his brows were bent into a blood-curdling frown.

The stowaway ever and again glanced furtively upwards, with that mingled propitiation and endurance which distinguishes the expression of a much-beaten cur.

When the recital came to an end, the Captain maintained an awful silence. The captive looked desperately round on the darkening sky, the heaving deck, the blustering sea.

"What did you do it for?" asked the Captain sternly.

"I dunno," muttered the stowaway, and kneaded his eyes. His red, raw hands were covered with broken chilblains, and one of his bare feet was bound up in a grimy, blood-stained rag.

"You thought it was a nice, easy, do-nothing life, with lots to eat and plenty of time to eat it in, eh?" said the Captain, with such ominous irony in his voice that the stowaway fell to blubbering outright.

"You deserve a taste of the rope's end," continued his judge, sternly; "and the next time I see you on this deck you'll get it, too. Take him for'ard, Blake; he's got a bout of sea-sickness before him, and when he finds his legs again, work him; work him well."

From a little distance on the deck three spectators had witnessed this interview. These were Fleet, the first mate; Macnab, a doctor, who, being a friend of the first mate, had been allowed to take a passage for health's sake on board the *Anna Maria*; and Tennyson Tupper, the supercargo. Now, when the Captain turned and strode moodily down to dinner, they followed him, exchanging sundry nods and comments.

But the Doctor and Mr. Tupper took their places at the table in

silence. It was only Fleet who, with his jolly laugh, dared plunge at once into the burning question.

"So we've got an addition to our numbers, sir? Well, the more the merrier, say I. Let us drink success to the voyage, and to the judicious young gentleman who, out of all the ships in harbour, selected the *Anna Maria* for the honour of his company. First to the voyage!"

The Captain gave an oath and an impatient chink to the glass which Fleet held out to him; at the same moment the ship lurched to starboard, and the glass and its contents, together with two plates and a pickle-fork, went spinning off the table into Mr. Tupper's cabin, the door of which unfortunately stood open. Before settling to rest in Mr. Tupper's berth, one of the plates completely smashed a triple shaving-mirror, its owner's most cherished possession.

With renewed objurgations, the Captain asked the steward why the devil he didn't put on the fiddles? while Fleet, nothing daunted, filled a second glass and proposed toast number two.

"Here's to the stowaway! May he live to be a credit to the *Anna Maria*, and add a laurel to the glory of her gallant Captain!"

Fleet and Macnab drank this toast by themselves. The Captain merely gave an exclamation, and refused to carry the wine to his lips; and Tupper, wondering why the smell of roast pork made him feel so flatulent, meditated a request to the steward for a nip of brandy.

"Dinna fash yoursel', Captin'," said Macnab presently when the wine had warmed him; "it's a gran' worruk you'll be doin', sirr, in savin' that puir bit laddie frae the untold evils of the streets. It's a worruk of pheelanthropy, sirr!"

"Unlucky little beggar!" cried Fleet; "perhaps he would doubt the philanthropy if he knew what he's before him. It's a dog's life for the best of us."

Fleet, rosiest, most rubicund of sailors, always spoke of his profession in this disparaging fashion.

"I winna deespute he's oncomfortable enough at the present moment," agreed Macnab with a chuckle; "I hear he's verra seeck. But it's an expeerience, mon, it's an expeerience, and expeerience is the ane royal road to knowledge."

"Tupper seems a good way along the road then, doesn't he?" whispered Fleet, nudging the Doctor.

The Supercargo was become, indeed, of a cadaverous colour; although, having obtained the brandy, he was in reality feeling better, and anxious to talk to keep up his courage.

"I must have a chat with that boy one of these days," said he; "there was a something in his eye which interested me. And there is also something interesting in his circumstances. Yesterday a denizen of the fetid alley, to-day riding on the bosom of the ocean, the centre of immensities! I must find out what impression this sudden introduction to Nature makes upon his young spirit."

"You are sentimental, sirr!" cried the Doctor; "never mine the immensities yet awhile. Let us furrest thry to pit a wee bit flesh on the lad's bones, which are loupin' thrae his skin. Let us thry to arrest the consumption which has a'reddy set its fangs upon him. Let us thry what science can do in a han' to han' wrestle wi' disease. No that I'm doubtin' for ane moment wha'll triumph! Supported by my meenistrations, I undertake to say, sirrs, science will romp home by sax lengths. An' I'll back my opeenion by thretty to twa—in ha'pennies!"

"Oh, we'll turn the boy into a smart sailor yet!" declared Fleet; "plenty of sea-air, salt meat and biscuits will do more for him than any of your nostrums, Doctor. It's wonderful how those young vagabonds fill out and improve, once they get their regular tucker. I'm inclined to believe that four square meals a day do more for a man than all the science in the world, and all the poetry added."

Tupper took another reviving dramful.

"You look upon man, Fleet," he remarked disdainfully, "as a merely superior brute, while Macnab there considers him as raw material for experiments. But in reality he is allied by the poetic instincts, which you both ignore, to the Angels, the Powers, and the Dominations; and from the bosom of every man, if you do but finger the right chord, celestial melodies may be rung forth. I shall take this poor waif—so soon as he is scoured down and has had his hair brushed—and endeavour to initiate him into the meaning of those higher mysteries without an acquaintance with which all corporeal benefits become as dead-sea fruit."

The Captain had already given signs of a ferocious irritability. Now he broke forth.

"One might be listening to a parcel of vapourish women, rather than sensible men," said he abruptly; "the subject of your conversation is a miserable, ricketty creature, diseased in body and depraved in mind; the scandalous product of generations of past sin. Macnab's medicines will no more give him health or strength than will Fleet's regimen, and though Tupper might perhaps instil a little bad poetry into his feeble brain, I don't see any cause for congratulation in that. The kindest and the wisest course would be to sweep him off the face of the earth altogether, and this could be done by leaving him severely alone. You can read in his face that he has not the vitality to attain manhood. To lend him a factitious strength is to enable him to hand on the curse he has inherited from his parents, and to add another scourge to the inferno of our great cities. Do you imagine that once set down on dry land again he will not drift back to a life as bad or worse than that from which he came? There are no more the makings of a sailor in him than there are the makings of anything else that is decent or respectable, and if I could have my way, I would stamp out all such vermin pitilessly, for

very humanity's sake, that the plague spot of their evil-living should not contaminate those around them."

His listeners exclaimed with warmth against the barbarity of these views, which jarred equally on Fleet's easy tolerance, Macnab's "pheelanthropy" and Tupper's young enthusiasms.

"It's a fearfu' thing to tak' life," said Macnab "withoutten it be in the interests of science, but even she demands the carefu' preeservation rather than the destruction of every pathologocal specimen."

"And after all," said Fleet, "the poor wretch probably enjoys his life in his own way as much as we do ours. Offer him the most delicate euthanasia from Macnab's phials, and he wouldn't thank you. A living dog, you know, is better than a dead lion."

"He is a human soul," said the Supercargo, "and so more precious than all the treasures of the deep. The cynical lightness with which you discuss his fate positively revolts me. The really humane man steps aside to avoid the worm upon his path, and will not crush with his foot the beetle perambulating his cabin floor—he calls in the steward to do it instead. But the conversation has entered low, depressing, and vulgar channels. Let us for the nonce forget the stowaway, fill our glasses, and with our Captain's permission, drink to the loved ones at home."

"To my mother and the flourishing auctioneer she has just given me for a step-father!" cried Fleet with a grimace.

"To the douce and bonnie widow wi' the bawbees I am yet to woo and win!" cried Macnab.

"To all the dear creatures," said Tupper, "who at the present moment read my poems and bewail my departure—to Ethel and Maud, Blanche and Alice, Phyllis, Muriel, Dolly."

"Whisht wi' your clishmaclavers!" interrupted the Doctor; "just han' roun' the whiskey stoup, mon, an' we'll toast all your braw doxies together."

The Captain raised his glass in silent abstraction. His eye softened as he thought of his young wife, of his three boys, of the quiet homestead embosomed among English trees, where alone he might unbend from authority and become his kindly self.

There was a violent shock forward. Everything on the table jerked up into the air as though the board had been struck a sharp blow underneath. A strange, shuddering groan ran through the beams of the ship from prow to stern. A still stranger silence followed.

The men rose from the dinner-table and stared at each other in consternation. At the same moment the second mate opened the cabin door, calling urgently for the Captain.

He and the rest ran up on deck to find a scene of unimaginable confusion. The storm was at its height, wind and water raged tempestuously, all hands were gathered together, all voices clamoured at once.

"We've struck . . . we're on the Margaret reef . . . we passed

the Margaret reef . . . that there's Ness Point . . . we're sinkin' . . . we'll be down in two seconds . . . we'll last awhile yet . . . the water's risin' . . . we're lost . . . !”

For a moment the Captain stood motionless, while hurrying thoughts clashed with and crossed each other in his brain. Then he realised that any hope of saving the *Anna Maria* was gone. She had struck upon a rock, a great hole was bored in her side, and still in sight of shore she was rapidly sinking. He seized a marling-spike. “Silence!” he thundered; “the first man who speaks, I fell him to the ground! Lower the boats.”

His gestures were understood; his words were inaudible; the men carried out his instructions, but the sea laughed him to scorn. The waves laid hold of the poor cockle-shells, tossed them hither and thither with contempt, whirled them round, turned them over, crushed them into matchwood against the sides of the ship and dispersed the fragments near and far.

The Captain made a trumpet with his hands and shouted to the men who stood three feet away: “There is nothing more to be done. I can save neither you nor the ship. In five minutes from now she will have found the bottom. Let every man take a life-belt and strike out for the shore. It is your only chance. Distribute the belts.”

There was a belt to every man on board. Each sailor slipped the apparatus over his head and shoulders, looked from the mountainous sea to the face of his Captain and, obeying the order written there, sprang from the bulwarks to begin the desperately unequal struggle with Fate. For a few seconds a white face gleamed here and there upon the black waters, then the rolling waves carried them all from sight.

The Captain, Macnab, Fleet and the Supercargo stood together; four belts lay at their feet. A fifth figure drew near and fixed its eyes, full of longing and despair, now on the belts, now on each of the four men to whom they were reserved. It was the stowaway, and as his sea-sickness had left him through terror of the Captain, so this terror in turn had vanished completely before the greater terror of Death. He glared at the coveted belts, and would have taken one by force had he possessed the strength; he would have filched one by fraud could he have found the opportunity.

Simultaneously, the four men recognised his presence, and three of the faces expressed a furious egotism that equalled his own. Each saw in him a possible disputant for his own chance of life. Fleet, with cheeks still constitutionally rosy, had lost his habitual smile; Macnab had braced every nerve and energy to the task of saving the precious disciple of science; Tupper, though scarcely more pale than before, had abandoned affectation and revealed in every lineament the natural man, a trembling animal, no higher in the scale than the stowaway himself.

"There is no time to lose," shouted the Captain, and before the words were out of his mouth, the three men had seized the belts nearest to them and plunged into the sea. Fleet was the last. He looked back towards his Captain. "Come!" he called.

But the Captain was attaching the last belt round the shoulders of the stowaway. "You cannot swim? Then keep your mouth shut, don't struggle, but let the waves carry you. With God's help you may reach the shore."

At this supreme moment it did not occur to the Captain which of the two, he or the stowaway, was fittest to survive; he saw only in the miserable creature a being whose helplessness laid a claim upon his own strength, and he sacrificed his life's chance for him as unhesitatingly as he would have sacrificed it for a woman or a child. The action appeared to him so natural and so inevitable that perhaps on this account he deserves no praise.

Which was probably the view taken by the stowaway himself, for without a word of thanks, he turned, ran to the taff-rail and sprang far out into the sea.

The Captain paced his deck a solitary man between the storming wind and waves.

The rats, driven out from their last hiding-place, swarmed about his feet for protection, and he could see their bright and suppliant eyes reading his own.

Then, with a roar and rush of water, he and they were swept apart, fathoms down into darkness, and the man, after a brief agony, a long joy-dream, lay at rest.

Of the remainder of the crew of the *Anna Maria*—by one of those strange freaks of Fortune, who seems almost sentient in her malignancy—only the supercargo and the stowaway reached the shore alive. They crawled feebly above the tide-line, and for long appeared mere inanimate bundles of drenched cloth and clouts.

But when the sun rose next morning these two rose also, recognised each other and, exchanging glances of contempt and hatred, crept off in different directions.

And there, like certain noxious plant-growths, each in his separate sphere thrives apace to this day.

GILBERT H. PAGE.



## THE BRETONS AT HOME.

BY CHARLES W. WOOD, F.R.G.S., AUTHOR OF "LETTERS FROM MAJORCA," "THROUGH HOLLAND," ETC.



ASKING ALMS.

IT is a long flight from Quimper to Guingamp. The former lies almost in sound of the waves of the Atlantic; in the latter you might almost hear the beating of the Channel. The tide of the ocean regulates the ebb and flow of the river of Quimper; the Channel supplies the Trieux, on which Guingamp stands in such picturesque repose.

A long flight for so small a country as Brittany, traversing almost the whole of Finistère. Moreover, not being a crow, you cannot accomplish the journey as the crow flies, though with a writer and reader's privilege, we may do so in imagination. The time has indeed come when we must do so. Much as we like Quimper, for the sake of its associations: its cathedral, its lovely

precincts, haunted by a remembrance of the Canon, Adrien, our charming and gentle Mademoiselle Ponpon: we cannot linger here for ever; and Quimper itself was so depressing and uncomfortable that we left it without very deep regret.

Let us suppose our flight accomplished, the journey through the air safely taken—on a broomstick or with the help of wings, or on the magic carpet, according to your pleasure—and we happily alighted; not on the chimney-pots of Guingamp, but in the antiquated and rather homely quarters of an inn, where winding staircases conduct you from floor to floor, and narrow passages and ill-fitting doors and a hundred other small signs remind you that Brittany is a century behind its time.

You shall take this flight, reader, though we never took it ourselves; never even employed the slow, sure-going railroad. For these recollections of Brittany are not the result of one visit, but of many, and we have intertwined times and seasons and incidents, making, as far as was possible, one picture, one record of many

experiences. We never ourselves went from Quimper to Guingamp; the latter was almost our very first experience of Brittany, whilst Quimper was one of our last.

We entered Guingamp one very bright evening, full of hope as to our wanderings through that primitive country. The sky was clear and cloudless, the air soft and warm. The town seemed quiet and full of repose. The rattling omnibus awoke the echoes and startled the air. The driver cracked his whip as though he would rouse the sleepers and bring them out to weed the grass that grew in their streets. Not that Guingamp had gone to repose when we first made its acquaintance: the sun though nearing the horizon, was still above it.

It was soon evident that a great deal of the quaint and old-world was still left to Guingamp; and, being one of our first experiences of Brittany, it was one of our most vivid and interesting. We had not heard very much of the old town; its reputation had not gone before it—that dangerous test to talent of every kind. One hears much of other towns in this little country; there are scenes so frequently painted by artists, that they are as familiar to the Londoner who has never travelled twenty miles from his native town (if such a marvel can still be found) as to the Breton himself.

But Guingamp is less known and visited. At the hotel we were the only roving guests; the remainder were a medley of commercial travellers—frequent birds of passage and habitués of the house—and a number of officers who, quartered in the town, took their meals here on pension; coming and going with a great clashing of swords and talk and laughter; taking coffee afterwards at the little table in the narrow, uninteresting courtyard or the closer and still more confined café, according to the caprices of the weather.

This small réunion in and out of the hotel was the first sign of noise, movement and quiet excitement that greeted us in Guingamp.

Nevertheless the little place is by no means asleep. In a quiet way its inhabitants are prosperous, happy and contented. The town is certainly behind the times, but not specially behind Brittany. Its inn was amongst the most primitive, which is saying a great deal; but it was clean and not uncomfortable; the women who waited upon us were amongst the most clumsy, the most incomprehensible in language, the least picturesque; the landlord was not exactly a man of resources, or he would have wakened up a little more to the needs of the declining century; and the one waiter who commanded the women-folk, evidently domineered over them and was therefore adored by them, would have gone about his work with a little more system, without such breathless endeavours to be in twenty places at once. To us, who like the commercial travellers were birds of passage, though not habitués, it was all very amusing. They were so many studies of character, these people; new types; for as yet, Brittany was almost as unknown as its language.

It had been difficult to believe that in these days of rapid communication, any country within reach could be a century behind the times ; but the experience came to us. A pleasant experience in Guingamp, though not always so in remoter districts.

In one way we were disappointed—Guingamp showed us few costumes. The inhabitants have to a great extent discarded them, here and elsewhere. So far they are in advance of their times : beginning, as in many other circumstances of life, at the wrong end. Only on the day of its Pardon, and on other high days and holidays, will costumes be seen in the streets of Guingamp.

On such occasions the town looks its best. It still possesses much that is picturesque : gabled houses, latticed panes, overhanging eaves full of romantic and mediæval suggestions. These make Guingamp well worth visiting, and the day of its Pardon will give you one of Brittany's most characteristic sights. Villagers flock to the town from far and near, all in their Sunday's best ; very many in costume ; every village, perhaps, varying in some essential detail. It becomes almost a carnival, without the wild rioting that masking always leads to. But—as we have already remarked—the Bretons take their pleasures more soberly than the hot and impetuous southerners ; there is more slowness and stability in their character. They possess a more lively conscience, which is rarely lulled to sleep ; a more profound sense of religion ; with them it is not all superstition, but a reality which influences their lives and bears good though not always very generous fruit. It is the one thing which saves them, for they are not generally wise or clever ; and their sense of religion keeps them from those errors and excesses which are usually the result of ignorance. The men, it is true, give way to drink, ruin their health and probably hand down the inevitable retribution to posterity ; taking the abominable spirit of the country with as much persistency as the Parisian takes his absinthe ; but the time may come when this, too, will yield to better influences, as continual dropping will wear away a stone ; and then the Breton type will develop, and the solidity of their character will raise them out of the lethargy that with them is a long inheritance.

We had settled ourselves at the hotel. Madame had politely assured us that we could only have rooms on the second floor, and Monsieur had duly regretted that we had not announced our arrival by letter. We replied that we preferred the second to the first floor, where there is generally a little more air to breathe. It was especially so on this occasion, for the inn was in a narrow street crowded with houses, though standing back in its courtyard ; and the roofs on which we gazed were far more open and picturesque than the dead walls of the lower storey. We found interest even in the blue smoke that curled out of the chimneys, scattered abroad a peat scent and vanished into thin air. Our rooms were so

small that we could scarcely turn round in them, and had to make up for the deficiency in cubic inches by sleeping with windows wide open. Still they were our very own for the time being, and in travelling out of the beaten track one learns to be thankful for small mercies. These unbeaten tracks have their infinite compensation. As Monsieur X. said, at Concarneau, it is good to pass into the quiet by-ways of the world, where we are not overweighted by a multitude who seem to have found out the secret of perpetual motion, and drown the *Lieder ohne Worte* nature is for ever singing with voices that have no music in them.

"We have larger rooms," Madame had said, when she came up with us, escorted by a sturdy Breton maiden, who carried our baggage and looked capable of lifting a ton weight without turning a hair. "We have larger rooms," said Madame, who seemed to expand as she reiterated the assertion, "but they are occupied. Our commercial travellers have to be studied—they are the backbone of our business; and just now we have put up several friends belonging to the officers who are our pensionnaires. Being the chief hotel of the town, we are naturally patronized by all the military element, and the noblesse of the surrounding country always descend here. Mettez-là, Marie-Justine-Amatalide," concluded Madame, breathless with conversation and mounting the rough and winding staircase.

"Mettez-là" referred to our traps. The only available spot in the room was the top of a small chest of drawers, and each room received its due proportion. "Je vous salue, messieurs," said Marie-Justine-Amatalide, a quaint greeting we received for the first and last time in Brittany on such an occasion. And then she descended the bare staircase with as much noise as a heavy dragoon. This sturdy woman was a true Breton specimen. As *vivandière* she would have followed a regiment all over the world and passed bravely under fire. We felt that if Marie-Justine-Amatalide possessed a brother, he would fight to the death.

"Yes," said Madame, rightly interpreting our gaze, "the room is small; but," throwing wide the window, "you have *le bel air*. I assure you that when Monsieur le Comte de Montesquieu de la Rochejaquelaine de la Pépinière comes to Guingamp, he prefers this room to any other."

Merciful Powers! Would every person we came across in Brittany possess such a terrible array of names?

"And does Monsieur le Comte de Montesquieu de la Rochejaquelaine de la Pépinière prefer his washstand in the passage?" we asked; for that important article of furniture was airing itself outside the door of the room. "It is rather a public way of dressing for so illustrious a personage."

"Ah! pardon! une petite accident," cried Madame, who, like her maid, Marie-Justine-Amatalide, was true Breton, and therefore liable to

mix her genders. "We place it outside for the sake of convenience in doing the room. Here is its place," indicating a recess about eighteen inches wide. "Everything fits perfectly, and is very comfortable. You might give yourself quite a bath here. By-and-by you will want dinner, but I recommend you first to go up to the church. If you wait until after dinner, it will be closed, and night will have



GUINGAMP.

come, and your first coup d'œil of Guingamp will be confused and unsatisfactory. For of course you saw nothing in that terrible omnibus. How it shakes one's bones, and makes one's very teeth rattle! I always say that in paving the streets they put the hard ends of the stones upwards. Allons! A tantôt, messieurs! Bonne promenade, bonne appétite."

With Madame apparently everything was feminine—perhaps in honour of her own sex. She was half-way down-stairs when the

amiable wish was delivered, and we heard her still running on as we passed through the passage into the courtyard. In short, we found that Madame's voice was never silent ; but it was an amiable voice ; she never scolded ; there was nothing of the shrew about her. Her pleasure was to talk and bustle about and feel herself an indispensable element in the welfare of the establishment.

"C'est une brave dame," said Monsieur to us later in the evening. "I don't know what I should do without her. It is true, she is always talking, but in her case it is such an amiable weakness ! The whole household will do anything for her."

In the meantime we had taken Madame's advice and gone out to inspect the wonders of the town.

And if they are not exactly wonders, at least they lay claim to much that is interesting. Like Quimper, Guingamp is a mixture of past and present ; only it is far smaller than Quimper ; there is less of the past, and the present is unromantic and aggressive. Yet here and there you obtain a view that even Quimper will not give you. Go, for instance, to the outskirts of the town ; stand on the bridge that spans the little river. You then see that Guingamp is more or less built on a slope, the centre of a vast, rich valley closed in by various chains of hills. The whole scene is striking and beautiful. The river has narrowed into a small stream, winding about in capricious, picturesque form. On one side it is confined by quaint and ancient houses, the very outskirts of the town ; houses that might have been there, with their grey walls and lattices, from time immemorial. On the other side you have rich undulating banks of emerald green, whilst small willows and other trees bend gracefully over the stream and contemplate their own reflections.

Rising upon the slopes are the houses of the town ; a wonderful vision of old roofs : grey, as all Brittany roofs are ; gabled, slanting, every conceivable form ; some with dormer windows, others an unbroken surface of slate ; an endless accumulation, an infinite variety. Crowning all, on the very summit of the height, is the magnificent church, its massive towers and tall steeple almost lost in the clouds.

And the view is almost finer on a cloudy than a sunny day. The latter, it is true, brings out bold lights and shadows, sparkles and flashes upon the running water, glints upon the frothy foam thrown out by yonder water-wheel which turns the mill and grinds the corn ; bids the world rejoice and be happy : but it is essentially a subdued picture ; a study in grey : grey walls, grey roofs, grey towers and steeple to the ancient church ; when the skies are grey also, they throw upon all a tone and depth more beautiful and poetical even than the magic of the laughing sunshine. Everything then is in distinct harmony, and it is one of the most striking and remarkable scenes in all Brittany—a country overflowing with old-world pictures.



The sun was declining, the shadows were lengthening in Guingamp. We passed through the very ordinary courtyard, where three or four officers were drinking Vermouth and Malaga by way of forcing an appetite for dinner. They did not seem particularly cultivated or refined, but bowed very civilly as we went by: an unexpected and kindly recognition of our rights, as strangers, to hospitality, for which we were grateful and responsive.

The immediate surroundings of the hotel are not interesting; but we soon reached the quaint market-place, or *Place de la Pompe*, as it is called. Many of the houses are very antiquated, with gabled roofs and latticed panes, and here and there a small turret built up like a swallow's nest. In the centre of this irregular square is a remarkable and beautiful fountain in the form of three basins, one above another, crowned by an image of the Virgin, from whose feet the water flows into the basins below. The second basin reposes upon sea-horses and nymphs. It dates from the fifteenth century, but has been frequently restored. The statue of the Virgin is the work of the famous sculptor Corlay, the other statues and ornamentations are Renaissance.

The whole scene was very striking, for at the further end, where the *Place* narrowed into a street, the view was closed in by the church. The doorway was conspicuous, and above all were the massive towers and spire, grey, venerable and dignified.

We stood long before this remarkable composition. It was, as I have said, one of our first experiences of Brittany; and from an artistic point of view, we felt that we had entered a land flowing with milk and honey. If our days were to be spent in a succession of such experiences, there would be danger of a surfeit of good things. Fortunately both mind and spirit have an infinite capacity for receiving and retaining impressions: pictures and experiences succeed each other, and all are carefully laid aside in the caverns of memory, to be separately withdrawn and examined in the future.

The church of Guingamp is a singular construction, contradictory in style, badly placed in point of the surrounding houses, which crowd and almost support it on either side; but, on the whole, it is very imposing. Especially so is the interior, which is partly Gothic, partly Revival, and is dedicated to *Notre-Dame de Bon Secours*. In the twelfth century it served as chapel to the first Counts of Penthièvre, and lords of Guingamp through Hadoïse, who brought the town as her marriage portion to Etienne of Penthièvre, brother of Alain V., Duke of Brittany. The present church was reconstructed at periods stretching from the thirteenth to the sixteenth centuries, a sufficient reason for its curious and unequal architecture. The west doorway, supported by two massive towers, is sixteenth century, and is profusely ornamented with garlands of flowers and statues of the twelve apostles. The clock tower alone is thirteenth century; its companion, having fallen in 1535, was rebuilt soon after in the style of the Renaissance.

On the north side are two magnificent porches, one open to the nave, the other to the transept. Both are capable of containing quite a small congregation and are fitted up with altars, where people tell their beads and burn candles to the saints. Very often you may see a number of worshippers in these porches, whilst the rest of the building is silent and deserted. Country people, or busy people of the town, who come in hurriedly to tell their beads or to say a prayer; and, their devotions over, hurry away again about their work. It is good that churches should be thus open, so that those who wish it should have an opportunity of a moment's retirement from the world: a breathing pause, during which the spirit may gather strength for the conflict between good and evil, the ceaseless struggle and battle of life.

One of these porches, opening to the nave, and of the thirteenth century, is enclosed by some magnificent fourteenth century iron work, and contains a celebrated statue of the Virgin, *Notre-Dame du Halgoët*, from which the church takes its name. The clergy consider it one of their most precious relics; it is supposed to work miracles, and graces all their religious processions. The porch has recently been restored and richly decorated.

The central tower is thirteenth century, and the spire which crowns it was added a century later. One of the four pinnacles at its base has disappeared. The south tower fell in 1535, and to this is due the contradictory styles of architecture in the nave, which on one side is Gothic, on the other Renaissance. The effect is rare and unusual, but not unpleasing. A great deal in the church is good and excellent. In the choir are two galleries or triforiums, one above the other, both dating from the latter half of the fifteenth century. The chapel containing the treasures is older, dating from 1371. The arching of the roof is very good. The whole effect of the building is massive and imposing rather than light and elegant. The organ-case is a specimen of magnificent wood-carving. The windows are modern, but very little light penetrates into the church. This rather adds to its massive appearance, and very much to the element of mystery.

The exterior, as we have said, is badly placed. It is crowded by houses built up to its very walls. Passing under an archway, you come upon a small irregular space; the back of the church forming one side, small white-faced cottages enclosing the other. They can hardly be called sacred precincts, for some are devoted to very secular uses. One or two are small cabarets; another is ornamented with a barber's pole and a brass dish, and the snipping of scissors may be heard within. The arrangement is primitive; the one downstairs room is devoted to the science, the door stands wide, and the luckless patient is revealed to the gaze of the idle and the curious, and the gibes of the street arabs.

All this was visible in our first walk through Guingamp. We noted

many quaint points in the town ; stood long before many an old stone and timber house with their gabled roof and dormer windows, or corbelled angle turrets : charms so rarely found out of Brittany.



GUINGAMP CHURCH (INTERIOR).

We went up through the market place, with its picturesque old fountain, where the running water makes perpetual music and the design, worn and refined with time, rather reminds one of a sculptor's

dream. Onward into the narrowing street, where the towers and spire of the church looked so venerable and dignified, and the porch, right in our pathway, invited one to enter.

The brightness of the day had faded into the evening shadows. The windows of the church—as many as were visible—gleamed upon us; the interior was evidently lighted up. We passed in, and suddenly stood before a scene never to be forgotten.

We thought to find the church empty, excepting perhaps for a few figures kneeling in quiet shadows. Instead of which we found service going on and the building crowded. One of the porches already described was brilliantly lighted up. At the altar stood a priest in gorgeous robes, facing the people, his hands raised in the attitude of benediction. All figures were kneeling, all heads were bowed. Absolute silence reigned.

In contrast with the light of the chapel, the church was shrouded in that deep semi-obscurity which is so wonderfully impressive and effective. Here and there a light gleamed like a star suspended in mid air: all other light was borrowed from the chapel. It also was crowded with kneeling figures, motionless and worshipping with bent heads. Deep shadows stood out everywhere, relieved only where pillars and aisles and arches caught the light reflected from the chapel.

Most of the kneeling figures wore white caps, whilst many of the dresses were black; and so weird was the effect that at the first moment we almost seemed to be gazing upon an army of nuns just risen from their graves. There was no sound or motion in the whole building. In the gloom, pillars and aisles and arches all seemed magnified and multiplied. The distant end beyond the choir might have been miles away; the congregation a multitude. It all composed with an indescribable effect, and it would be difficult to say what element held us so spell-bound. The kneeling figures; the light gleaming upon the white caps that stood out in such contrast with the deep gloom above them; the undefined outlines of aisles and arches, showing up in such beauty and solemnity; the feeling of infinite space given by the obscurity of the east end; the solemn, mysterious shadows; the porch beyond all, so vivid in its brilliant light; the priest in the attitude of benediction standing out as a central figure full of dignity, delivering a divine commission; all the solemn silence and stillness, as though the whole congregation were waiting for the manifestation of some unseen power or glory: each and all contributed its wonderful and peculiar feature of religious grandeur, mystery and fervour to the scene. We came upon it at the moment when it was most impressive and full of suggestion. We had entered hundreds of churches crowded with worshippers at all hours of the day and night, but had never seen anything approaching this. We had visited buildings that are considered wonders of the world, and that the world travels days and weeks to look upon; but nothing had so impressed us as this scene in the church of Guingamp.

We stood outside the congregation, taking no part in their worship, yet probably more impressed than all; transported, as it seemed, above the world into regions of eternal calm. The solemn silence lasted for many minutes; long after the priest had turned to the altar, and with his back to the kneeling, motionless congregation, seemed to be interceding for his flock or invoking a blessing upon them.

Many minutes passed thus; minutes that to us seemed hours, so much experience and emotion had been concentrated in them. And then, as if we both felt that the harmony of the scene must not be disturbed, and nothing must break in upon its perfection, by a common movement we turned and left the building, while yet the priest prayed at the altar and the people knelt with bowed heads. No sound or movement had disturbed the effect; silently we entered, silently we departed; the door closed behind us as if cased in down; and closed upon the vision.

We felt indeed as if we had seen a vision in which was nothing earthly or tangible. "If I tried to paint it for a hundred years," said H.C. "it could never be done; and if it were once done, I need never attempt another." We longed for its repetition, but it was of those things that never repeat themselves. We paused, we hesitated, we wished to return; no, it must not be; it would not do. The vision stood out perfect and complete; never to be lost or forgotten; so it should remain.

As we passed into the street, quaint and interesting as Guingamp is, it all looked very tame and commonplace. We had come back to the world with a wrench; the transition was too violent: the people about us, good and worthy folk no doubt, were not in any picturesque attitude of devotion, and were occupied with very earthly thoughts and plans. Business has to be attended to; man must work to live; if not always by the sweat of his brow, yet with a weariness to the spirit that is still more painful; life's realities are prosy; these occasional visions and experiences perhaps only make these realities stand out more vividly. The people at their shop doors as we passed seemed to have only one idea and object in life, at the moment: recognizing us as strangers, they wondered whether we should pass by or enter. As we went down the quaint square, where even the fountain seemed a shade less artistic and beautiful than we had so recently thought it, in one of the narrow turnings we thought we heard running water and the sound of a mill-wheel. At the same moment out came a miller, big and stalwart, and crossed to some building out of sight.

Down we went. It was only a few yards, but how it changed the scene—and how lovely the scene we gazed upon! A very different scene from that we had found in the church, which was composed of many elements, every one of them appealing to the spirit, the imagination, the higher emotions.

Here we stood under the broad canopy of heaven, and the earthly

scene was fading in the gloaming. The sun had gone down, the sky was flushed and rosy and threw an intense colouring upon all. A few floating clouds were tinged with red. Streaks of cloud in the far horizon were edged with gold. Between them the colour was fast changing to that lovely opal that is seen only in the north at the hour of sunset.

We stood upon a height, looking downwards where not very long ago we had gazed upwards. We were midway upon the hill. Old-fashioned roofs surrounded us; the backs of quaint and gabled houses, out of whose latticed panes generation after generation had gazed with more or less appreciation and passed away to scenes where summer and winter, and spring and autumn are not, nor scorching suns, nor wintry winds, "nor man's ingratitude, nor friends remember'd not." A fair and lovely scene. The river ran down the steep hill-side, turning the wheel in its course. Lower down, the water ran more smoothly, the houses found their reflection on its surface, the bridge on which we had lately stood, grey, arched and picturesque, closed the view.

Very near us was the mill, and even as we stood, some invisible machinery disconnected it from the water, and it was stopped for the night. Its work was over. Out came the miller, and after a moment's hesitation, as if trying to read whether we were friends or foes, communicative or taciturn, he came up to us.

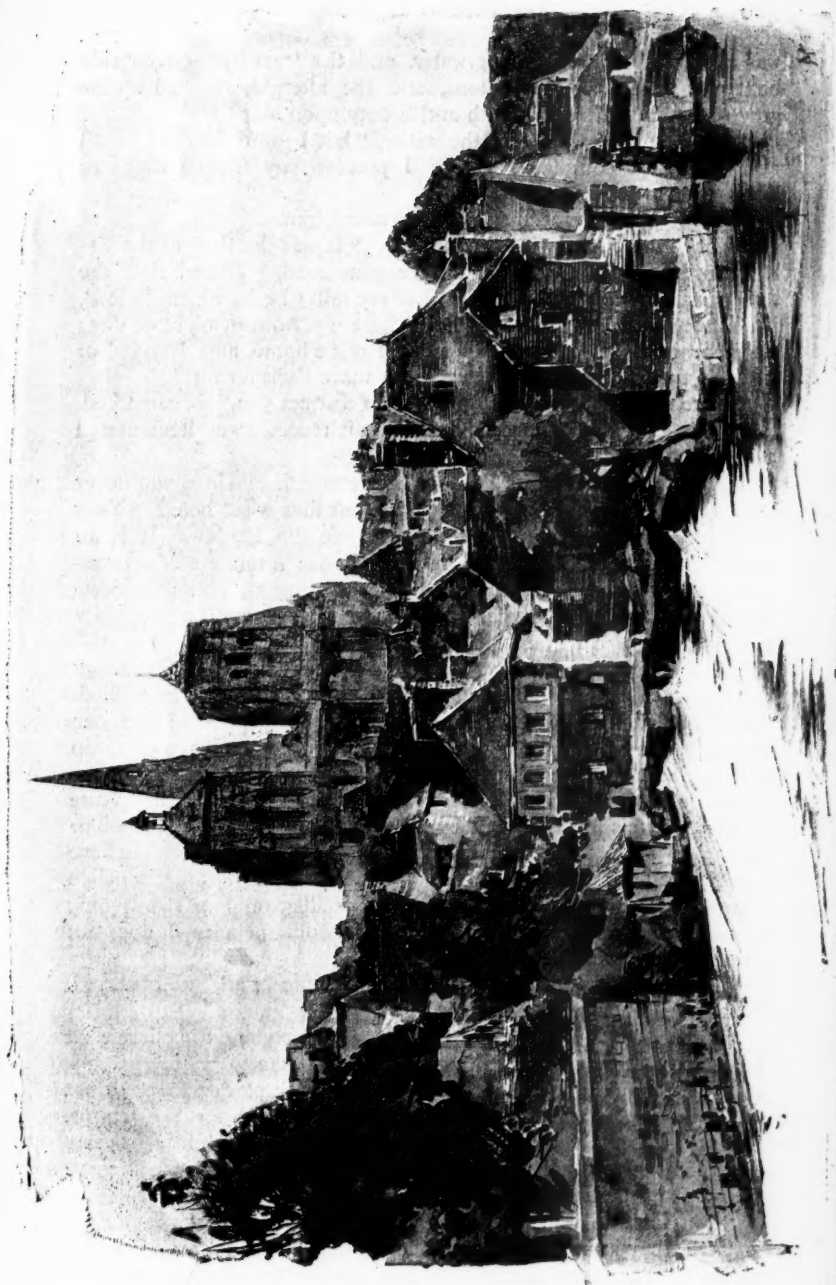
"You are strangers, sirs," he said. "You are taken with the view, and I am not surprised. It is a wonderful view; a wonderful change in a few yards, from the confinement of yonder Place to all this height and breadth. I have been here, grinding corn, for thirty years, but I never tire of the view. I feel I have a right to it after thirty years: and I look to those grand old towers up there, that fine old bridge below, and say to myself: 'You are all mine; no one can take you from me. As much mine as if I actually owned you, and you furnished me with a revenue.'"

"All its delights without responsibility," we said. "It is a remarkable view, and, once having pitched your tent here, we can understand your remaining."

"It was pitched for me," returned the miller; "my father lived here before me, and my grandfather before him. They were all millers, back to my great-grandfather, and this mill is actually my own, though all the surrounding prospect is not. You have seen the outside of the mill—will you not come in and see the inside also?"

Without being quite in tune for wandering over an old mill, we felt it would not do to decline this hospitable invitation, and followed our leader through all the mazes and intricacies of his domain: squeezed ourselves between crushing-stones, and mounted short ladders which led through trap doors to higher regions. Not that it was anything but a low building. But it stood, as it were, over a precipice and commanded the valley: and now that all in the mill was still, there





GUINGAMP.

was a sound of far-off rippling water, and the trees by the river side bent and kissed their reflections, and the afterglow lighted up the grey roofs and threw a warmth and beauty upon all.

"A sleepy old town," said the miller, "but I grind half its bread and must not complain; and if I possess any friends they are here, for I have none elsewhere."

"Have you never been away?" we asked him.

"I once went to Paris," he replied. "It was the time of the Exhibition. I thought I should have gone mad. The whirl of the streets was far worse than the whirl of my mill-wheels, which, indeed, is so much music to me. In Paris there was no rest, night or day; no breathing. At the end of a week I came home, and I stayed in bed two days to grow calm again. No more Paris for me."

"Here certainly you will find little to distract you," we remarked. "It cannot be very often that Guingamp is roused to excitement and activity."

"Only at the time of its Pardon," he returned. "Have you never seen a Pardon at Guingamp? No? Your first visit here? Your very first day? It is a pity; you should see the Pardon. It is an interesting sight; more so than most Pardons: a mixture of ceremonies, religious and secular. We have pilgrimages, church processions, and National dances in the streets. Everything together makes a sort of carnival of it."

"And when does it take place?" we asked.

"On the Saturday immediately before the 1st of July," he replied. "It is called the Pilgrimage or Pardon de Bon Secours; and our shrine is one of the most frequented in Brittany. They come up to worship before that rubbishy wooden image in the church, Notre-Dame du Halgoët, and it is pretended that it works miracles." Here he shrugged his broad shoulders and put on a look of compassion. "I hope I am not a bad Catholic," he observed, "but I don't believe a word of all their wooden statues and miracles, and no other sensible man would believe it either. And as for telling my beads and going to Confession and all that, it may do for some people—it does not go down with me."

"But at that rate you are not a Catholic at all," we observed. "They would call you a heretic."

"I cannot help it," he returned. "I cannot pretend to believe what I do not, or to be other than what I am. I like to say my prayers, and to be thankful for my mercies, and to ask pardon for my sins; but I like to do it all in the darkness, with the earth for my temple, the sky for my dome, the stars for my witnesses. I feel nearer Heaven at such times than I ever could feel in a crowd with incense burning and bells tinkling and priests processioning."

"But what do your priests say to all this heresy?"

"Oh, they know me well, and leave me alone," he replied with a smile. "They have found out it is useless to interfere with me."

I give my share to the poor, because it is right to do so; right to return a thanksoffering for one's mercies; and that goes a long way with them. Perhaps I have gained some ideas from my mother," he explained; "she was a Protestant; a descendant of the Huguenots; and she was a saint if ever there was one on earth. If I have only lived a tithe of her saintly life when the end comes, I shall have done well. But what brought us to this? Talking of le Pardon, I think. Yes, you should see it. If you will come next year, I will myself be your guide and show you everything."

"It is hardly worth a journey from England," we objected.

"Quite worth it," he returned, "because you would go to other places and see other things also. On that day—the day of the Pardon—the town is up betimes, I promise you. The people are quite excited and buzz about like bees in a barrel. The streets are gay with flags and flowers. People troop in from all the villages round about, from many a distant town. The road from the station is like a fair. The bells of the church ring and clash in the air, just as if there was not noise and stir enough down below. It is a gay scene enough, for you may see no end of costumes. The pilgrims refresh themselves with the water of the fountain, which has been specially blessed for the occasion. The wooden statue of the Virgin is dressed up in gorgeous robes of silk representing archangels, wrought upon an ermine ground. She wears the gold crown specially sent to her in 1857 by the Chapter of Rome on behalf of the Pope. This goes on all the morning. A grand procession parades the streets—it is really a very lively affair, with a larger assemblage of all sorts of Breton folk than you will easily find elsewhere. For, you see, nothing is stronger than superstition and nothing attracts like a miracle-working wooden image. In the afternoon the fair does a great trade and the shows are crowded, for the pilgrims think they have earned their amusement."

Here the miller looked at us comically out of his eyes, and evidently expected us to make some remark about this happy conjunction of the sacred and secular; but feeling on delicate ground, we kept silence.

"You say nothing," he resumed, "but you think all the more; and in many things we are probably of the same opinion. But about the Pardon. When night falls, the most exciting part of the performance begins. The people commence the National dances, and tread their measures to the sound of the bagpipes. I used to enjoy it once, but I have had my day; we are not always twenty. I am quite contented now to look on; more often than not, I don't even stir from my mill. At nine o'clock another procession leaves the church; the wooden statue is solemnly transported to the Place, where three immense fires are lighted. *Feux de joie* they call them. This over, the people go back to their dancing. At midnight a *messe solennelle*

brings the Pardon to an end, the people disperse and the town gradually falls into repose. Yes, as one of the sights of Brittany it is decidedly worth seeing."

We had been standing all this time with our backs to the open window at the top of the mill, the miller leaning against a wooden pillar close to a trap door through which he could gaze into the depths beneath. But from the window there were yet greater depths, upon which the shades of night were now falling rapidly. The after-glow was fading out of the sky, and here and there a star was beginning to shine out, soft and silvery.

"Yes," said the miller, following our gaze, "these are the true wonders, and He who made them will perform our miracles. We do not want the intervention of wooden images. Can you imagine it? Better say one's prayers and make one's confessions here than, boxed up in a wooden partition, to a fellow-mortal and a fellow-sinner. We are nearer Heaven, as I have said."

We left, thinking that if the miller was a type of his country, the Breton character was neither so much behind the times nor so reserved and inhospitable as it was supposed to be. But experience taught us that he was not quite a Breton, either in thought or feeling; his ancestors must have been in advance of their times, and his Huguenot mother had sown wholesome seed. We met him again more than once, and we found him invariably communicative and sensible; a man, amongst his own class, given to good works.

We returned to our inn too late for table d'hôte, which was not a matter of very great regret; especially as Madame was obliging enough to make us "un petit diner apart" all to ourselves. The officers, with their friends, were taking coffee outside on one side the doorway, their clanking swords in full evidence; the commis-voyageurs were on the other side the doorway. The commercial and military elements had evidently nothing in unison with each other. "Like the House of Commons," said H. C. "Conservatives on one side, Radicals on the other. Whenever my Aunt Maria has been especially irritating, I always pretend that I hold the most advanced Radical views. I tease her until she has one of her swooning fits, and when she recovers I am half-way down Park Lane. Then she writes off to her brother, and tells him that if I think of putting up for Parliament he must either keep me out of it or make a convert of me. Uncle Jasper, who despises the Lower House, and says the new reading of the old saying ought to be 'the assemblage of the first shopkeepers in Europe' writes back to her and says the whole thing is hopeless: the country is going to the dogs. I confess that I don't quite see it, but that may be my Radical view of the matter. Of course I'm not really a Radical, but an out-and-out Conservative."

Madame was very good, and even waited upon us with her own light foot and her own fair hands, pressing her best dishes upon us,

and declaring that a good appetite was the greatest safeguard against "the little accidents of travel."

"There is nothing like it," she declared. "If you eat well, you may do what you will. The great thing is to keep up the constitution. You may then defy the world."

"What would Lady Maria say to such a creed?" we asked H. C.

"She would use her fan and her vinaigrette, and declare that it served her right for coming to this barbarous country," laughed H. C. "And she would allow herself three crystallized violets less daily by way of penance."

We, however, under no such conscientious restrictions, did justice to Madame's hospitality, whilst we listened to her praises of Guingamp.

"It is not because I am a Bretonne of Guingamp that I praise it," she said; "though I have counted every stone of its streets in growing up, know every ripple of the river, every blade of grass in the fields,

and am friendly with every inhabitant. But it has so many interesting points. I love its old houses—those that remain. It has the best Pardon in Brittany—the national dances with the sound of those lovely bagpipes would delight you. And the procession at night—with that miraculous statue! When they light the fires at nine o'clock, and the flames throw their reflection upon the silken robes and the golden crown, and you gaze upon those saintly features, voyez-vous! you would declare that the eyes flashed fire and the lips moved."



A PEASANT.

"But do you believe that a wooden image can perform miracles?" we asked gravely.

Madame crossed herself. "Monsieur, if I questioned it for a moment I should say it was a temptation of the diable. What the church tells us we must believe without doubting. Besides, I can speak from experience."

We begged the privilege of her experience.

"I have had many, but here is one of them. My friend, Madame Lannebert, had a child sick unto death. The doctor had given her up. The poor mother in despair went up to church, and asked Notre-Dame du Halgoët to have pity upon her. At the end of a week the child was well again," concluded Madame triumphantly.

"But you confess that there was a doctor in attendance upon the child?"

"And that he had given her up," rapidly returned Madame. "It was a clear case of miracle."

"Have you many excursions from Guingamp?" we asked, to change the subject; for many of the Bretons possess a spirit of controversy in religious matters which they delight to exercise. It is all conscientiously done, and they would suffer martyrdom rather than abate an inch of their convictions.

"We abound in excursions," returned Madame emphatically, as she handed some delicious artichokes to H. C. "There is no end to them. I know their charms by heart. There is Sainte-Croix to begin with, delightfully situated on the right bank of the Trieux, and owing its name and origin to an Abbey of Augustin Monks, founded in 1130 by the Comte de Penthievre and Hadoïse, who brought him Guingamp as a dowry. I have heard you have an Abbey of Sainte-Croix in England," proceeded Madame, "in one of your cathedral towns; I forget which."

"Winchester," we prompted. "Quite true. We have visited the abbey, and the visit is amongst our pleasantest recollections."

"Ween-ches-terre," repeated Madame with difficulty; "your names are too hard for me. But that is not the only link we have with England. The stuff which you call *gingham*, and with which so many of your umbrellas are made, first came from Guingamp. *Gingham*" (she pronounced it *Geeng-am*) "is merely a corruption of Guingamp. Have you not a song which says something about 'Isabella, with the gingham umberella?'"

We confessed our ignorance of the ballad.

"Then," pursued Madame, with the air of a professor delivering a lecture, "you call your umbrella a *gamp* in England, n'est-ce-pas: and many people think it is taken from a celebrated character in one of your English novels. Not at all: it is merely the last syllable of our town, thus applied because the material with which the umbrella is made first came from Guingamp."

"You should come to England," said H. C., "and give us a lecture



upon philology, umbrellas, and general antiquities. You would have crowded audiences."

"Monsieur is laughing at me," laughed Madame in her turn. "But what were we talking about? The Abbey of Sainte-Croix, I think. Well, *our* Abbey of Sainte-Croix has been turned into a farm; pure sacrilege; and you have to pass through the farm-yard to reach the church.

An artist, who was staying here for a month last year, told me so much about the architecture that I became quite as learned in that as in umbrellas. The principal gateway is fifteenth century. It has two doorways, and over the smaller is a long inscription, containing the whole of a letter of safeguard given by Louis XV. in 1736. The transept and choir of the church are earliest Gothic. The manor house belonging to the Abbey was built by Pierre de Kernévoy, who was Abbot in 1530. I have seen it so often that I know every moss-grown stone by heart. It has a lovely hexagonal tower surmounted by a conical roof. Nothing can be more picturesque."

"Madame is quite an antiquarian as well as a philologist," said H. C.

"I have always loved the antiquities," said Madame modestly. I even went so far as to vow I would marry a grey-headed octogenarian, who would always put me in mind of grand ruins; by which means I should be always in contemplation of the sublime; but when my husband proposed, with his fine black hair and dark eyes, somehow I forgot my vow until it was too late to draw back. I had promised, and a positive promise is more binding than a sentimental idea."

At this moment Monsieur happened to come in and saluted us.



OLD HOUSES, GUINGAMP.

The "fine black hair" was now streaked with many a silver thread, but otherwise there was nothing typical of a grand ruin or suggestive of the sublime about him. He was still strong, stalwart, and full of energy.

"Monsieur is asking about the excursions," she explained; "I tell him they are endless. Is it not so, *cher ami*?"

"The neighbourhood is undoubtedly full of interest," assented Monsieur. "There is Sainte-Croix——"

"I have described Sainte-Croix," interrupted Madame.

"Then there is Grâces," proceeded Monsieur, "with its interesting chapel, built in 1507 by Guy de Bretagne, in the florid Gothic style. Close by are the interesting châteaux of Kerurien and Kéribot, belonging to Monsieur de Saint-Maur; and the château of Kerano, once inhabited by James II., of England. There is the Château de Carnabat, with its galleries of portraits, very effective if not exactly chefs-d'œuvre. There is Toul-Goulic with its enormous rocks, one of the curiosities of Brittany. The river, which is full of fish, disappears here for about five hundred yards, and then reappears to continue its course to the sea."

"And then the north coast," cried Madame, who evidently thought it time to resume the parable on her own account. "We are quite accessible to the north coast, as you know: to Saint Brieuc, and to Paimpol, with its little harbour and its lovely sea. But we should weary you with a description of all our excursions: they must be made, and seen, not described."

We felt this ourselves. The most vivid portraiture must fall short of reality; and as by this time H. C. had carefully plucked and disposed of his artichoke, leaf by leaf, and our repast was at an end, Madame was released from the self-imposed duty of attending upon us. Monsieur marshalled us into the courtyard, where he declared that coffee had long been waiting—such coffee as Brittany could not rival. The place was deserted: the House had broken up; Conservatives and Radicals had paired out; each no doubt going his separate way. But as we sat down, half-a-dozen of the military element appeared, with clanking swords and full dress uniforms; turned in to refresh themselves with sirop and eau sucrée and petits verres, according to fancy. Down they sat, giving us a military salute, and entering into very animated conversation; anxious to learn our impressions of Brittany—of which as yet we knew so little, though that little was full of promise.

The next morning we saw some of them marching through the town with a regiment of Breton soldiers. We were standing at the moment at the door of a photograph shop, and the little owner had been greatly entertaining us by his quaint conversation and original views of life.

"Those are the men to fight!" he exclaimed, as the regiment trooped past with measured tread. "They are hard as nails and

will live upon a crust of bread. Nothing daunts them or turns them ; on the battle field they are like tigers. France has more than once owed her safety to the Breton soldiers. They are loyal and patriotic—but specimens.”

They were indeed. Short, clumsy, with faces typical of the lowest origin, shabby, ill-fitting clothes, they, for the most part, looked as our ancient Britons may have looked in the earlier centuries, when they dwelt in huts in the backwoods of their little island. And these men must have possessed very much of the same instinctive courage, the same indifference to life. Many faces there were which showed something higher and better, but we have described the prevailing type.

They all passed away, and the people at their shop-doors went back to their work refreshed by the little excitement. In front of us was the interesting church, with its fine portal, its massive towers and tall spire. Just below us the Place opened out and the water was plashing with a cool sound from basin to basin. The quaint old houses with their gables and turrets and dormer windows seemed to have put on youth with the morning sunlight. Everything was fair and promising and full of peace ; the regiment was only an emblem of war, and chiefly served to awaken in one a wish for that day to come when wars shall cease. We turned down the narrow by-way leading to the mill and the fair open prospect. Everything was bright and sparkling. “The world grows younger every day” seemed the message of the wind as it rustled past us on its way up to those lofty church towers. The miller’s head at this moment appeared at one of his windows. He gave us a friendly nod, which seemed to claim us for old acquaintances.

“You are enjoying the blue sky,” said he. “The stars are still there, though we don’t see them. That is where I place my faith and look for my miracles ! I hope you have made up your minds to come to our next Pardon,” he cried. “It is well worth the trouble, and I should like to be your guide. I would have an extra *feu de joie* lighted for you, and the National dances should never flag. Ah, messieurs, think it well over ! And now for work !”

He raised his white cap and disappeared. In another moment the water flowed and the wheel creaked and turned, and immediately within the mill there was a noise as of subterranean demons at play. The good mill was grinding the corn for the town and was evidently not of the opinion that silence is golden.

And we also went our way, rejoicing in all the freshness and beauty that surrounded us ; charms which give to life so much of its possibilities for happiness.

## A TALE OF CARRARA.

## I.

CARRARA. A mass of houses, little, big, old, new, white, pink, grey, all flung down with little or no attention to symmetry upon the banks of a stream whose waters are yellow when they are not black ; a church spire here and there ; crooked streets now and again opening into an irregular Piazza, mournfully overlooked by a dilapidated statue ; a garden at intervals, over whose grey, crumbling wall the orange shows its boughs, and the Spanish jessamine drops her blossoms upon the head of the passer-by ; wine shops everywhere ; the click of hammers from the innumerable studios ever on the ear ; a slough of mud in rainy weather, a Sahara of blinding white dust in dry ; a general air of busy occupation, most unusual in Italian towns ; a good deal of drunkenness, unlimited swearing, an occasional brawl, much kind-heartedness—such are the chief characteristics of the place.

The scene around, however, is such as amply makes up for any urban deficiencies.

On the immediate North the mountains loom directly over the town. Bold, fantastic peaks shooting up into the sky overhead, their flanks scarred and seamed here and there with snowy rifts that gleam and glint in the sunshine—rifts scratched by the puny hand of man, and which are the quarries familiar by name to the entire world. They resemble in their brilliancy torrents of falling water which some enchanter's hand has suddenly turned to stone.

East and West, undulating hills, rich in chestnut woods, olive groves and vineyards, with habitations peering forth from the foliage here and again.

South, the gradually sinking plain, with its waving cornfields and countless homesteads, ever sinking, sinking, till it reaches the blue sea, and mirrors its fringe of feathery verdure in the azure of the placid waters.

Lilian was sitting upon her favourite grassy bank under the boughs of the broad-leaved chestnut, the town stretching below at her feet, the silence around her broken by nothing more molesting than the hum of insect life or the faint sound of the quarryman's song as he trudged homeward from his labour.

Lower and lower sank the sun, until its rays resembled sheaves of golden arrows sped to earth in token of friendly farewell.

From vale and hollow the dark shadows began to steal forth, while a sudden coolness floated upwards ; the gurgling trill of the nightingale broke softly from the wreathing vines, to be answered by the farewell of the blackbird, as he retired to rest in his thicket of myrtle and arbutus.

Orchises, from pale yellow to proud purple, growing thickly around the bank on which the girl was sitting, raised their heads with renewed life as the heat of the long and cloudless June day yielded to the approach of night, while a huge campanula nodded from its perch upon a hoary crag, shaking its bells as if in response to the deep chime of the Cathedral floating up from below.

Bat and beetle came forth, the one skimming noiselessly as a thief through the gathering gloom, the other droning around in eccentric circles. The stars, too, stole forth to shimmer in the blue and amber immensity overhead.

Louder and louder trilled the nightingale, her ecstasy swelling as the darkness fell. Earth and air were rapidly veiling themselves for slumber.

A firefly flashes forth, and as suddenly vanishes. Then another, and another—two—three—a score—hundreds—till, breaking in thousands upon the darkness, they dance in fiery phalanx. Now sinking low upon the dewy grass, now rising high amid the dark boughs overhead; never halting, ever flying, threading their weird maze, gleaming as if to mock the summer lightning playing upon the sea-bound horizon. Beating like a pulse of fire—flashing, falling, wreathing, rising; here a sheet of flame, there a starry canopy; now a glittering serpent writhing amid the dusky olives; now a flood of gems shimmering across the flower-sprent meadow—floating, soaring, sinking, spreading, till, after having enveloped Lilian for one short moment in a farewell blaze of emerald light, the joyous band flitted onwards, to be suddenly extinguished in the deep recesses of the neighbouring wood.

## II.

THE second floor of No. 4, Piazza del Duomo. A house with much of the discomfort, all the ugliness, and none of the quaintness of antiquity. A house with rows of small, shallow windows, unadorned with either cornice or frieze, but, in compensation, much yellow stucco and the greenest of venetian shutters: a house altogether so modern-looking that, were it not for the marble tablet over the doorway stating that "here Michael Angelo resided during his two sojourns in Carrara," you could have set it down as the brick and mortar dream of some retired cheesemonger of fifty years ago. Retired cheesemongers of to-day would never have rested satisfied with the plain ugliness of No. 4.

Floor No. 2 had been let furnished to an elderly Irish gentleman and his wife—Mr. and Mrs. O'Connell—childless, and free of incumbrance save their own tempers, a lady companion to Madame, and a negro girl in common to both—a negro girl who, in a fit of Irish expansion, had been adopted by them, and whom tardy repentance condemned to wash up the dishes and make the beds.

The O'Connells had lived for some time somewhere in Western

Africa, where Mr. O'Connell had filled an insignificant government post from which his temper had finally ousted him; and it was during their sojourn there that "Fanny," the black girl, had been taken in hand.

The "rooms" like the majority of Italian furnished apartments, contained nothing more than what was barely necessary: and the landlord had known to a nicety how to combine the minimum of chattels with the maximum of charges. In a word, he had fully adopted the plan of all letters of lodgings here, from Milan to Messina.

However, neither Mr. O'Connell nor his better half—she was this in every sense of the word—made any complaint, though the floors were of brick and carpetless, the kitchen smoky, and the crockery so scant as to necessitate, at times, a pie-dish doing duty for a washbasin. They might almost be said to relish, rather than resent, similar disorder, for it doubtless gave a picnic sort of illusion to life: and as they had already passed so many years of their lives in wandering over the globe without having a fixed home anywhere upon its surface, this latter, in its real sense, had become a superfluous possession. It is quite possible that a comfortable house would have proved irksome to them.

He was literary, she devotional, both untidy, to say the least of it. And between the old gentleman's unpleasant temper, the lady's yet more irritating passiveness, the black girl's slatternly vanity and the general discomfort and discord of house and keeping, it may well be supposed that Lilian Leslie's lot was by no means to be envied.

She was an orphan, with nothing in the world to depend upon, save her own exertions and a sum of twelve hundred pounds left her by her godmother. Her parents had been gentlefolk born. Her mother, unhappily, had died early—her father, unhappily, had died late—no time being thus afforded the former to prepare her child for the battle of life, while ample leisure was left the latter to squander away selfishly, even to the last penny, a comfortable, if not a handsome, fortune.

The whole little history, in fact, was but one of the thousands daily evolving around us, and all tending to show what a strange mystery our earthly life really is, and how impossible it is for us to fathom its depths or purpose. We can only regard it as a trial to our faith in God, an invitation to trust in His goodness and foresight, and an earnest of a better life hereafter.

As has been said, the O'Connells had passed a part of their lives in Africa, amid Krumen and Crocodiles, and there were times when they seemed unable or unwilling to forget it. Especially Mr. O'Connell; he was somewhat too prone to take white men for black, and treat them accordingly.

Fanny, when quite a baby, had been found under a palm tree after a general massacre of all her people, and instead of furnishing



some wandering lion's supper, had been brought to the O'Connells, and had been baptized in the Roman Catholic Faith.

The O'Connells were of that persuasion ; or rather, she was ; for Mr. O'Connell did not seem to have faith in anything particular, save in his own dear self, nor any religion except his own comfort. He was a feeble dabbler, too, in science, and like many of his brethren, found it much more easy to deny than accept what he could not define.

On the return of the elderly couple to Europe, about eighteen months previous to the opening of our tale, a "mutual friend," who, for lack of occupation and amusement, had taken to doing a sort of amateur registry office business, had installed Lilian Leslie in the position of "dame de compagnie" to Mrs. O'Connell, at a salary of £25 per annum, everything found ; an unlimited opportunity for the exercise of patient endurance also generously provided gratis.

Fanny had just carried in the lamp, and was making vain efforts to light it at a side-table, preparatory to bringing in tea.

One match after another grates upon the box and, apparently, upon Mr. O'Connell's nerves as well, for he looks up from the writing-table at which he is seated, the light of two candles making his bald old head gleam out from between them like a ball of ancient ivory, glares across the room at his adopted daughter and breaks forth :

"What the deuce are you scraping at there? Don't you see that I am writing?"

Fanny grinned across in reply, and gave a fresh scrape, as if to score a note of admiration in her patron's honour.

Mrs. O'Connell moved uneasily in her armchair, and said in her usual limp tone : "I beg of ye, Thomas, dear, now don't use that dreadful word. Don't ye know——"

"No, I *don't* know, nor do I wish to know anything but that I am writing, and that you two women are disturbing me. There, another match! That's the seventh. Pray, do you suppose that matches don't cost money?"

"Of course, they do, Thomas. But the matches here are so bad, their heads are always flying off. I suppose it's the damp."

She rose, with a resigned sigh, and crossed slowly over to Fanny's assistance.

"Why, there's no oil, you silly child. Of course it can't light. And the wick is all cauliflowered. You should be more careful, my child, you should indeed."

"Well, I fill him and trim him last Sursday, and to-day's ony Sunday."

"Well, never mind now ; take it into the kitchen, my child, we'll settle it up there."

Leaving her husband to growl at his leisure over his women and his woes, Mrs. O'Connell followed her black handmaid.

As the door closed behind the retreating petticoats, the lamp of science which old O'Connell fondly believed to exist within his head seemed to flash forth with redoubled radiance, and fling its light across every feature.

He was engaged upon a work to be entitled "*Sunny Italy*," a book that will, doubtless, cause a sensation on publication, of one kind or another, and which can scarcely help impressing its readers, owing to the fact of the author being as ignorant of the language as he is of the geography of the country he has undertaken to describe.

When Lilian entered, the elderly couple were already seated at tea. The gentleman vouchsafed neither glance nor greeting, only continued to munch, in utter unconcern—the click, click, click, of his all-too-fine set of false teeth playing a cheerful castanet-like accompaniment. The lady, however, smiled feebly, and in her usual spiritless voice, enquired where Lilian had been.

"Up to old Forti's vineyard, as usual," replied Lilian, seating herself; "the night is perfectly lovely."

"Isn't it rather late for you to be out, my child?"

(Mrs. O'Connell would have my-childed Queen Victoria herself, had the occasion offered itself.)

"Well, it *is* rather late, perhaps. But it is so very near, you know, and Car—old Forti's son, I mean—saw me home. He's in the kitchen now, waiting to see Mr. O'Connell about to-morrow's excursion."

Here a peal of laughter penetrated from that department to the parlour, and clearly showed that Carlo, at any rate, was not losing his time, whatever his sable companion might be doing.

A volley of clicks, terminating in a gulp, betokened Mr. O'Connell's attention being at last aroused.

"Have him in, by all means," he said. "The grotto I am about to visit to-morrow—to say nothing of the quarries—will form the subject for an important chapter in my work. Yes, have him in by all means."

Here he settled himself with becoming dignity in his chair, while Lilian rose to summon the farmer's son to the august presence.

"Good evening, signor," said Mr. O'Connell upon Carlo's entry; pointing at the same time to a chair with what might be supposed to be a monarch's condescending suavity to an ambassador of whose political bias he was, as yet, not quite certain.

Mr. O'Connell "signed" the very street-sweepers—with the same species of sincerity implied by the epistolary "obedient servant."

Then, laying aside the grand, condescending tone and taking up the usual domestic tartness, he said to Lilian: "Now, mind you interpret correctly. Yours is a responsible office, and I hope you are by this time aware of its importance."

If not quite alive to its weight, she was, at least, keenly so to its weariness. But she betrayed neither her ignorance nor her distaste:

only nodded cheerfully, smiled brightly across the table to Carlo, and prepared to do her best for both master and man.

"You are the son of the Signor Forti from whom Mrs. O'Connell purchases fruit and farm produce for my household, are you not?"

The question, duly interpreted, was speedily answered in the affirmative.

"Has your name any particular origin. Forty in Italian means strong in English."

This important information was addressed to his wife, who nodded limply in reply.

"Had you ancestors, I mean: ancestors who distinguished themselves in any way by their prowess? I am writing a most important work upon Italy, and—Mary, give Signor Forti a cup of tea."

But, with a smile, Carlo disclaimed all knowledge of predatory forefathers, and declined the proffered tea with thanks. He had tried it already on a former occasion, and had afterwards described it to his father as a decoction of hay.

"Are you well acquainted with this grotto? Quite able to act as my guide?"

"Si, signor."

"Is there no danger?" murmured Mrs. O'Connell. "Ask him, Lilian, my child, if there is no danger."

Yes, there was a certain amount of danger, but none that could not be obviated by common prudence.

Mrs. O'Connell's cheek grew, if possible, a shade paler, and her eyes closed in helpless dismay while Lilian translated the young man's sketch of the labyrinth of rushing waters, arching halls and never ending passages that combine to form the "Grotto del Tannone." She shuddered openly at the conclusion: "Professor Spalanzani groped his way onwards for over seven hours without reaching the end."

"Now, don't make yourself ridiculous, Mary. If there is any danger, I shall be there to see you through it."

Mr. O'Connell's utterance and gesture reminded Lilian of Napoleon I. She did not say so, however.

"Mary" sighed wearily. She knew from experience how utterly useless any wish or word of hers would prove to bring about relinquishment of the proposed exploration. Her Thomas was as obstinate as he was selfish, and always insisted upon her accompanying him everywhere. But more than this: she would not have suffered him to go alone, even had he proposed it. She really loved the man with all the strength of her feeble heart and foolish head.

In the hope of finding some sort of comfort, at least, she drained the teapot of its last drop: and then, not being satisfied with the result, lay back in her chair and, swaying gently to and fro, and with closed eyes, commenced making mental appeal to every saint

in the calendar to improvise some effectual means of keeping them all out of the wretched grotto.

Carlo's rising brought her to with a start: she descended limply from the mystic heights in which she had been soaring and was on earth once more. Alas! All had been satisfactorily settled, and an early departure fixed.

"But, is there no danger of being lost in that dreadful place?" moaned the poor woman.

"Trust to me for that," replied Carlo, with a smile that betrayed no small share of confidence in his own stalwart self.

It awakened none in poor Mrs. O'Connell, however. Mr. O'Connell had already too much of his own to require that of anyone else.

Lilian alone felt its influence. Her cheek flushed and her eyes brightened in the anticipation of the excursion. There was danger to awaken a pleasant excitement—the sense of being about to be dependant for protection and guidance (a sense dear to all true women) upon a magnificent specimen of the sterner sex; the knowledge of being about to see something she had never seen before and, perhaps, a host of other sentiments that we will not for the present enquire into.

She felt herself a very happy girl as she lighted the young farmer to the door and wished him a hearty good-night.

### III.

THE sun was bright and the sky blue; the hills gleaming in their morning freshness, the mountains veiling their majesty as yet in a purple haze. In fact, the saints had behaved shabbily to poor Mrs. O'Connell on this, as on many another occasion. The day was as fair a one as any could wish to see, no token of either earthquake or flood, or of any other especial cataclysm such as the poor woman had, in the secret depths of her weary heart, half dared to desire.

All was bright and balmy as the little party, headed, of course, by Mr. O'Connell, crossed the threshold of No. 4 and stepped out upon the Piazza. There stood, or leant, or sat, a whole group of ragged urchins, collected to witness the departure of "gli Inglesi" for the grotto.

Big and burly, clad in imposing tourist costume, carrying his biggest umbrella, Mr. O'Connell stepped out of the doorway to be greeted with a suppressed murmur of admiration by the assembled street arabs. Mrs. O'Connell, clad in her usual shabby black merino embroidered down the front with seedy red convolvulus in crashwork—her own performance—followed: she bore a big black bag on one arm, a sunshade in one hand, and a campstool and an unpleasant-looking circular air cushion in the other. *Her* advent, however, was hailed with tokens of respect and sympathy. For many a soldo

had her pale thin fingers slipped into the hand of the mendicant—and mendicants swarm in Carrara—and her pale face and weak voice had finished by conquering the sympathy of the entire population of the place.

A little ragged fellow came forward from among his scarcely less picturesque companions, and, sliding up to her, gazed mutely up into her face with the deprecating, trusting expression of a dumb animal seeking relief and sympathy.

"Toto, my child, how is your mother?" asked Mrs. O'Connell, as she stopped to lay her long, thin hand upon the boy's elfin locks.

"Pretty well, signora, thank you."

"And your father? You have heard nothing of him?"

These words were uttered in all but a whisper.

The child silently shook his head, and the bright tears gathered in his black eyes and commenced rolling down his grimy cheeks.

"God help you, my poor child," murmured Mrs. O'Connell.

Then a loud, deep voice arose with: "Well, do you suppose I am going to stand here the whole morning? I——"

Mrs. O'Connell hastily slipped a coin into the child's hand, gave him a kindly nod, and hurried to rejoin her husband.

Next came Lilian, in a pale blue cotton dress and a wide straw hat, forming a pretty and pleasant contrast to Fanny, who followed closely in spotted gown, black hat and feather with scarlet poppies, a red cravat, her whole person simmering in satisfaction and sunshine.

"La Negra, la Negra," broke from the little crowd as she appeared, and, as usual, the whole troop gathered at her heels. One, however, who ventured somewhat too close to the object of his wonderment, received a cuff from Carlo which sent him staggering back, and effectually cleared the way by creating a diversion: and availing themselves of this, our party turned down the Via Ghibellina and, crossing the "Ponte delle lagrime," entered the dusty Carriona Road.

#### IV.

"Now, Miss Leslie, mind you keep close to me," said Mr. O'Connell, when they were fairly out of the town, and found themselves upon the picturesque road leading to Torano, "keep close to me, and be sure you translate Signor Forti's words correctly."

Carlo seemed to catch the old gentleman's meaning, for, with a cheery, intelligent nod, he drew a step nearer to both. A bright smile broke over his bronzed features, and his eyes flashed with a new light as they rested for a moment upon Lilian's fair features.

Carlo Forti was one of those who smile with eyes and soul, not with lip alone, as is all too common nowadays. He was one, too, upon whom the women turned to gaze—lithe, yet stalwart in form, and with a head such as a sculptor loves to model. Well-to-do in the world, too: an only son, and heir to as nice a bit of property as

one could wish to see. Olive woods and a vineyard overhanging Carrara, with a snug home peering out from a knot of chestnut trees as if to gaze forth upon the far-lying sea, to say nothing of a tidy sum of money deposited in the National Bank.

Mrs. O'Connell bought her butter and bacon of old Forti, and you would not have given a franc for the coat he wore; he would haggle over a half-penny, and was somewhat rough in manner and loud in voice. Yet, for all this, he was a good man at heart, had been a faithful husband to his dead wife, loved his strapping son with all the strength of his old soul, and was always glad to see him cut a good figure, though he could never persuade him to stick a carnation behind his ear on holidays, as is the fashion of the youths and maidens in these parts.

It was no mercenary motive that had induced Carlo to undertake the task of guide on the present occasion. He had, with the tact common to all Italians, early taken in the whole state of affairs in the O'Connell household, and his pity for the pale, elderly lady and the bright, fresh young girl was boundless.

He determined to do all in his power to mitigate their cheerless lot, and if there lurked some more selfish motive at the bottom of it all, it is neither you nor I, dear reader, that can fairly trace the source of our best actions without finding some smirch of egotism at their root. Suffering of any description was the key to Carlo's heart, and if the violet eyes of the English maiden had had their influence upon him, let it not be charged to his discredit.

"Of course, thou wilt be paid for thy troubles," old Forti had whispered into his son's ear at his starting.

"Of course, I shall be paid," replied Carlo, with a laugh, as he bounded down the steep. And as he laughed, the vision of the violet eyes rose before him in a manner so as to be already a payment in itself. His idea of payment was not that of the old man.

Mrs. O'Connell, bag, campstool and cushion (Carlo had, in vain, tried to relieve her of them), was, as usual, lagging a dozen paces behind, and was only kept moving at all by a periodic administration of unpleasantly energetic words from her husband. "Now, Mary, do come on, will you," or, "Now, Mary, I won't have you lagging in that way. I'm not going to be broiled to accommodate your laziness."

The words look innocent enough—their tone was everything. He never stopped to utter them—only turned half round and launched the dart, with a "click, click" of his beautiful teeth, like the disagreeable old Parthian that he was. The moral pick-me-up never failed in its effect upon the poor lady, while no word of complaint ever passed her lips.

Carlo, on his part, more than once devoutly wished the old tyrant would stumble, as he turned to discharge his arrow, and fall into the stream, along whose banks they were proceeding.



Fanny, who, by the way, was much more attached to her self-loving master than to her self-sacrificing mistress, but impatiently adapted her own sturdy pace to the poor lady's languid one; her short, dry words, her eyes ever fixed in the one direction, her irritated manner plainly showed how much she would have preferred marching along merrily by Carlo's side.

They wound along upon the banks of the rushing rivulet, richly wooded heights rising on either side, grey rocks alternating with the freshest verdure: tufts of brilliant flowers waving from pinnacled cliff, or from crumbling wall-patches of velvety moss, contrasting richly with the sepia-tinted rock cropping up in their midst; beds of fern still pearly over by the late-lying dew and gleaming up from every hollow, like a scrap of fairyland fallen to earth. A wilderness of olive and chestnut, with, here and there, a farmhouse peeping forth from its wreathes of vine. Now a copse of myrtle and arbutus; again, a ruin all ablaze with flaunting snapdragons. The air fresh and balmy with the breath of honeysuckle and wild rose; the feathery pines, with which the lofty ridges were crowned, standing out soft and clear against the cloudless sky. The whole pervaded by that inexplicable something that heralds approach to the savage majesty of mountain scenery.

All was fair to look upon, pleasant to listen to on that bright June morning, and our party trudged onwards through the white dust in tolerable enjoyment and comfort.

Under the shadow of a red, overhanging rock, from beneath which gushed a tiny spring, Mr. O'Connell halted, drew out a notebook from one of his many pockets, and, after looking around him for a moment in impressive solemnity, entered the following:

"One of the most striking features of the scenery around Carrara is the strange mingling of the richest vegetation with the most sterile aridity. It is my opinion —"

But you will read his book, and there learn what his opinion is, so we will only add that his observation is a true one.

The picturesque little town of Torano, nestling between its double chain of wooded hills at the very foot of a frowning mountain, all seared and seamed with blasting, was soon reached, and our party, previous to exploring the cavern, at once proceeded to visit the quarries in the immediate vicinity. Such had been the ukase issued by Mr. O'Connell, in utter disregard to anyone's convenience save his own.

The word quarry, in its usual sense, gives no sort of idea of what a Carrara "Cava" really is. It is no excavation, more or less deep, nor is it a tunnel of any description. A Carrara quarry lies open to the dew and sunshine of heaven and stretches down the mountain flank like a frozen torrent, making you blink again. A seam on the face of the cliff—a scratch made by man's puny hand on the grand face of nature.

At the foot of one of the nearest quarries our party halted. Here Carlo established Mrs. O'Connell, bag, cushion and all, in a comfortable nook, formed by three enormous blocks of marble, lying ready for transport. The poor woman looked her gratitude, for, what with the dust and the heat, she was unable to speak. So there she silently enthroned herself, looking like a dark-robed saint in a niche, with her pale blue eyes fixed in weak wonderment at the long, glittering quarry that ran up the mountain side immediately before her, and whispering to herself that it resembled nothing so much as a gigantic winding-sheet.

It very likely was the winding-sheet of some poor quarryman or other.

Lilian would gladly have taken a seat beside her, but Mr. O'Connell insisted upon her going on with him some paces further to translate Carlo's information for the benefit of his "Sunny Italy."

Fanny flitted from one to the other, a startling contrast to the dazzling white all around: her black skin, wonderful dress, broad smile and flirty manner, succeeding fully in attracting the attention of every quarryman within reach, all of whom ceased their labour to gaze, grin and exchange remarks, which it would be imprudent to note.

From time to time the long-drawn notes of the horn of warning echoed from the heights above, giving notice of the firing of a mine. Then, on looking upwards, the workmen, reduced by distance and contrast to mere pigmies, were to be seen hurry-skurrying to a place of safety—comparative safety, at least—amid the adjacent rocks. A moment or two of expectant stillness. Then a sudden roar.

An enormous mass vibrates overhead, trembles on the verge of the precipice, shivers as if in terror at the void into which it is about to launch itself. It sways forwards, turns slowly over, and then with a bound leaps into space, crashing down the steep with the roar of thunder, and scattering right and left on its frantic path showers of deadly fragments of snowy marble that gleam and glitter in the sunshine like hail, and each stone of which carries death on its range.

With a sudden shock, and, at most, a dull bound, the falling mass is brought to a standstill by some rocky impediment and lies grovelling there in ignoble defeat.

The dust has floated away, the workmen have crept from their refuges, the ring of pick and crow is heard once more, snatches of song float up on the still, warm air: man's restless activity resumes full sway. And so on till again the horn sends forth its warning that the wings of death are about to be unfurled anew over their heads. Nor death alone—but what is, in most cases worse, mutilation; meaning here starvation and beggary for life.

And scarcely a week passes that is not marked by the loss of some limb or life. The stony stare of the mountain face relaxes not—it heeds not the human emmets that swarm over it, creeping and

climbing to assault its breast: care not that the labourer's morning kiss to wife and child is to be his last upon earth—that he who climbed the heights in all the strength and vigour of manhood be carried down before eve by a band of silent companions.

Is it, perhaps, a merciful dispensation that all the human race are prone to think of death for others, but rarely for themselves?

A volley of whoops and howls, such as warring Indians and wrathful Irish are said to give tongue to, suddenly breaks forth from behind the ridge of rocks round which the dusty road winds. Mr. O'Connell starts, snaps the point of his pencil, peers over his glasses for a second, and, the hubbub increasing, looks anxiously around him for a place of safety.

A cloud of white suffocating dust veils even the near rocks themselves from view. And like lightning from a thunder-cloud, volleys of oaths flash out from the surging dust—something terrible is evidently approaching. Poor Mr. O'Connell remains for a moment paralyzed, then turns to flee. With an agility for which none would have given his elephantine form credit, he scrambles to the top of a near block and turns to gaze from his refuge upon the turmoil below. He, too, looks like an elderly effigy.

Mrs. O'Connell, half dead with terror, could only squeeze herself back to the very end of her niche, and there, with closed eyes, await what she supposed was to be her last hour.

Then forth from the ever-nearing cloud of swirling dust looms bigly one pair of wide horns after another—then follow the white-hided, dark-eyed oxen, their brown ears flapping. One pair after another, every second couple with an elf-locked lad perched between the horns and sitting face to tail, brandishing a club and joining his shrill voice to the infernal chorus emanating from a rabble of half-clad men who, brandishing long goads, execute a species of devils' dance along the entire length of the cavalcade, rushing hither and thither, shrieking, cursing, gesticulating as if possessed, yelling as if for life—the whole scene a very pandemonium of din and dust, confusion, dirt and noise.

On they come. Past Mr. O'Connell, statue-like upon his perch, floundering forward over the dusty road; past pale Lilian whom Carlo had gently drawn aside to a place of safety; past the excited Fanny, who would persist in clinging closely to Carlo's arm with the pertinacity of a horse-leech—past Mrs. O'Connell, who sat in her niche and gazed forth upon the lumbering train with the expression of a saint gazing upon a revelation of the inferno—on—on—on, till, at last, behind the long train of oxen emerged from its cloud of dust a long, low truck, framed of poles and four wheels like huge cheeses, and upon which lay a block of glittering marble, destined for the hands of the sculptor, or doomed to the teeth of the sawmill.

## V.

MORNING wore on, and as the sun rose higher and higher, the refreshing air died away, and a breathless, fiery haze spread itself, like a scorching veil, over the face of the earth.

Above the bold crests of the mountains, rolls of snowy cloud began to show—rising stealthily as if to peer down into the valleys below—surging silently up from unseen depths beyond, and standing out in dazzling relief against the deep azure.

Mrs. O'Connell, in her own meek mind, likened them to gigantic piles of cotton wool; and, after all, her simile was not a bad one.

Mr. O'Connell called it a cumulus, and forthwith improvised a lecture which might have proved interesting to any one able to understand it.

Carlo gazed thoughtfully at the ever-rising mass, scanned the horizon with searching eye, and then, in somewhat embarrassed manner, addressed himself to Lilian:

"Signorina, do you see those clouds yonder? They bode a storm, and a heavy one. Will you kindly tell the Signore there that perhaps it will be better to put off visiting the grotto till another day?"

Lilian obeyed.

"Not visit the grotto to-day? Stuff and nonsense. The storm is not coming here—it's all on the other side of the mountains. And even if it did, what matter? I wish it would—it would give me matter for a fine description. No, no. I have made up my mind to see the cavern to-day, and go I will. Now, Mary, it's time to be marching. Come."

They set off, retracing their steps towards Torano all through the breathless heat and over the dusty road. No wild bird's note was now to be heard. Nothing but the dull thud of their own feet in the thick white dust. Not an insect seemed to move—nothing gave token of life save the snowy mass of cloud ever rising in noiseless billows.

On reaching the low doorway of the cavern, Carlo halted for a moment to give a last look without.

The cloudy mass had lost much of its whiteness—it was now varied with every tint of grey. Only its extreme edges gleamed yet with the snowy purity of its primitive hue. It was now resting, so to say, on the crest of the mountain range, frowning down into the valley below, and with an army of followers surging silently up from behind it, rank after rank, like warriors ranging themselves in battle array.

A sharp word from Mr. O'Connell made Carlo turn. With a slight shrug of his shoulders which might mean everything or nothing, he obeyed his patron's sign and entered the narrow passage-way that leads to the mysterious grotto.

The party followed.

"What is it you fear?" whispered Lilian to Carlo, as he halted

just within the entrance to light one of the bundle of torches that had been provided.

"Nothing worse than a good wetting," he replied, smiling. "When a storm comes down over the mountain in that fashion, it brings with it water enough to flood the whole valley for a bit. But no matter; you see the old gentleman will have it; and, after all, we shall always have a roof over our heads."

This was literally true, though not in the usual sense of the word. They had reached the first of the endless chain of halls, and high over their heads hung the arched vault, looming down in grand gloom, and hardly distinguishable by the light of their torches. Huge stalactites gleamed ghastly and spectre-like out from the darkness around.

The air was cold and damp, and the sound of rushing waters surged up from beneath their feet, telling of menacing depths below. Heavy drops, too, filtering from the roof, fell upon the limestone floor with a tinkling sound which, in warmth and sunshine, would have been pleasant enough, but which, amid the darkness there, awakened nothing but a start and a shiver.

One big icy drop splashed unexpectedly down upon poor Mrs. O'Connell's neck, causing a suppressed scream, which, echoing through the endless corridors and chambers, took up the proportions of a very demon chorus. A rough remark as to her always putting herself in the wrong place, was all the consolation she got from her husband.

"Thanks ever so much, my child," she murmured to Lilian, who helped to draw the flimsy black scarf she was wearing closer around her throat; "that will do nicely." Then, with a half repressed shudder, she once more followed her ponderous husband's unhesitating steps.

"This is grand! grand!! grand!!!" pronounced Mr. O'Connell approvingly, as he halted beneath a dome of fretted stone to knot a silk handkerchief about his neck. "Grand! I say, grand!!" And then he gazed slowly around him, as if in expectation of the genius of the place coming forward to give thanks for his good will and approval.

But the echoes of his own words was all he got, and they, too, died away, leaving the tinkling treble to join in once more with the deep bass droning up from the unseen depths beyond.

Behind them the low, narrow entrance, outside of which the sunlight possibly lay bright and cheery; before them, unknown miles of gloom and grimness—a very sea of darkness—stretching within a labyrinth of corridors and chambers.

Yet on they went, slowly and with uncertainty, with hushed voices and furtive glances around.

Each, too, with their own particular feeling. Mr. O'Connell's that of egotistical triumph; his wife's that of unmitigated dismay; Lilian's one of pleasant excitement.

We will say nothing about Carlo's feelings—they can be guessed at.

On, on, on, the red glare of the torches paling, the flame shrinking as the atmosphere around grew dense and denser.

And meanwhile, without the cavern, the sun still shone bright—but the ever-rising cloud mass swelled and billowed, threatening to blot out the entire blue from sight. Distant mutterings from time to time broke on earth's listening ear, and, now and again, the olive and poplar shivered and swayed beneath the sudden gust of cold, icy wind which now sped over the valley, as if to herald the approaching storm.

The explorers reached one of the many lakes within the hill, and halted upon its stony shore. The torches flung their wild glare over the dark waters, streaking them as if with blood. To the left, the lake stretched far back into the brooding gloom. To the right, it narrowed suddenly into a swift-flowing flood, across which a broad plank had been laid for the benefit of visitors.

The stream glided silent and swift as a serpent from its darksome den, but only to roar and rage the more frantically, with hurried hiss and foamy flight, in its wild encounter with an endless array of bristling, broken rocks, through which it precipitated itself and among which it thundered on till swallowed by the labyrinth, into which, since the day of creation, the friendly sun had never shone.

Lilian and Fanny crossed the plank without hesitation or difficulty. Mrs. O'Connell drew back in dismay when it came to her turn.

"Now, Mary, don't make a fool of yourself," cried her husband in his biggest voice.

A thousand echoes repeated "fool, fool, fool," as if a scattered demon chorus had been lurking on high and around. This was too much for Fanny, who broke out into such a fit of laughter as to call forth a burst of goblin merriment such as probably all the jumbees of her native land would have been unable to beat. She seized Carlo's arm, as she loved to do upon the slightest occasion, and only relinquished it when the weird voices had once more died away.

Then the young man re-crossed and led over Mrs. O'Connell with as much gentle kindness as if she had been his mother.

None but Mr. O'Connell now remained.

"Are you quite sure the plank is strong and sound?"

He addressed the question to Carlo, who, guessing its import, replied by running heavily over it to the other side where the old gentleman was standing. He would have willingly helped him over as he had helped the others, but wisely judged that the irascible Irishman's weight was quite enough for the board to bear.

With much the air of an elephant cautiously feeling its way upon suspicious ground, Thomas O'Connell at last ventured himself upon the plank, advancing one substantial foot before the other only after first dabbling softly at the wood to test its solidity. Finally, however



he arrived safe and sound on the opposite side where the anxiously watching women were awaiting him.

With a bound that made Lilian's heart leap to her very throat, Carlo followed ; then they once more set forward.

Hall succeeded to hall, generally connected by a tortuous passage, so low as to compel a regular creep on hands and knees in some places. And many of these halls were ghastly in the extreme, with their enormous proportions lost in the gloom, out from which loomed on every hand white, fantastic forms—giants in stony cerements—shapes, such as one sees in prehistoric animals, barring the path with mute menace—sights, such as start into life in dream-land—sounds, undefined and undefineable. Yet, on they went—on—on—on—through the ever-thickening, never-ending gloom.

The storm-clouds without have suddenly leaped up and covered the whole heavens with a pall. As in envy of its brightness, blotting out all, and now scaling the highest heavens as with a myriad of invading foes. Then it was, as if at a given signal, the demons of destruction were let loose to wreak upon earth their wildest fury. Flash after flash, peal upon peal, scourging the upturned face of Nature with cataracts such as make each tiny rill bound forth a brawling brook, and swell the peacefully gliding stream into a roaring flood.

But, as yet, those wandering in the heart of the hill had heard nothing of the battle raging without : the thunder crashing across the vault of heaven awoke no echo in the rocky labyrinth below.

They were sitting in one of that long series of halls, nearly a mile from the entrance, fantastic forms around and above them, the dense air causing the lights to burn dim and heavy, no breath of life, or definite sound, to break the sepulchral stillness.

The provisions which, with the torches, Carlo had taken care to provide, were spread upon a mass of stone shaped like an altar ; and in a crevice of this stone the youth had managed to stick a couple of candles. The scene was a weird one. Those five persons there might have been early Christians met together for secret worship, or they might have been plotters of anarchy and crime. Old O'Connell, with his bald head and splendid white beard, could have been either an officiating priest or a conspiring leader as he stood there beside that limestone block, his dark robed wife a worshipper or a victim. In one sense of the words she was both. The rest of the party could be converts, or conspirators. The whole, however, was a study such as seldom falls to the lot of either poet or painter.

"Well, this is something worth looking at," said Mr. O'Connell, as he gazed round him with uplifted glass (the only one) filled to the brim with some of the best wine Carrara could produce ; "something well worth seeing, indeed."

For that matter he might, in his old heart, have alluded to the

liquid amber in his glass, that flashed as the dim flame of the candles fell upon it, for there was really nothing else particularly calculated to awaken admiration—little besides a centre of sickly, lurid light in a circumference of outer darkness.

"Thanks ever so much, my child," said Mrs. O'Connell, as she took the leather cup from Lilian's hand which Carlo's forethought and kindness had provided and offered.

The meal—if meal it could be called—was eaten with appetite, though despatched in silence. The solemn stillness around had fallen upon all with numbing power, and even the African girl's discordant laugh and idle chatter were for the moment hushed.

"What is that great white mass there?" asked Lilian, when the last slice of sausage and the last roll had disappeared. "There: I mean that." She pointed over to a duskily defined arch, from beneath which a huge white object gleamed faintly forth.

"That is the 'organ,'" replied Carlo: "the grotto we are now sitting in is called the 'church.' Ah, you should have seen it when it was all lighted up in honour of the Prince's visit. That was something like. An illumination a giorno. Paradise itself could not be more magnificent. It was all ——"

"What is he saying, Miss Leslie?" cried Mr. O'Connell, pricking up his ears at the word "Principe," one of the few Italian words he knew: and, at the same time, his wife's face relaxed a little as she caught the sound of "Paradiso."

(He loved a prince as an Englishman is said to love a lord. She had higher aspirations; though, at the present moment, she was somewhat in a dudgeon with her saints for their not having saved her from being led into the place in which she found herself).

"Ah, the Prince. Yes. I understand. Well, I am glad to know he has been here. I shall certainly send him my work as soon as it is published. I might even dedicate it to him—the opportunity would be a good one. Well, I shall think it over. But your comparison, Signor Forty, is all wrong: Paradise means a garden, and here there is nothing to recall anything——"

He stopped short. A curious sort of vibration was running through the vault, causing the flame of the candles to flicker. A piece of stone fell from the roof.

"Heaven save us, what is that?" cried Mrs. O'Connell.

But ere the words were well out all was still once more; no sound struck upon their eager ears; no sight upon their questioning eyes.

"It seemed to come from there," said Lilian in a low tone, pointing towards the side by which they had entered.

"Oh, yes. He come up dat way," cried Fanny.

The words of both were addressed to Carlo.

"Oh, Thomas, dear, do let us be going; there's a dear, kind man."

"Time enough, time enough," was the reply. "Miss Leslie wants to see the organ. Nay, I know you do. There, Signor Forty, pray

do the honours of the organ to the Signorina. And mind"—this to Lilian—"mind, I say, you make good use of your eyes. You will describe it to me minutely. I feel tired myself. There; now go while I make a note or two."

He set himself to write with renewed energy, for he felt morally refreshed at having crossed his weary wife's wishes without any particular sacrifice upon his own part.

In grave silence he wrote on by the red light of the guttering candle. A confused cluster of stalactites and stalagmites of all sizes, and between which it was possible to squeeze in places; a curiously fretted roof above. Such was the object upon which common consent had bestowed the title of "organ."

Lilian and Carlo stood within the fantastic maze of white, semi-transparent pilasters, the red light of a single candle flinging a confused network of shadows around—the young man's handsome, eager face bent in undisguised admiration upon that of his companion.

Her eyes sank beneath that passionate gaze. Both were silent, though never before had either been eloquent as then, nor said to each other what that silence so plainly expressed.

He took her hand and clasped it warmly within his own. Then Lilian looked up into his face, tears were welling into her violet eyes. A tremour ran through her whole frame.

"Ti amo, Lilian, ti amo. Lo sai? Ti amo."

He drew her unresistingly to his broad breast, and, for a moment, her fair head rested there.

"Mi ami tu, pure," he whispered.

She raised her eyes to his. "Sì, Carlo, io ti a ——"

The word died upon her blenching lips, for there, out from the shadow, within a group of ghostly columns immediately behind her lover, gleamed forth a pair of fierce, fiery eyes.

She could only stare back, with whitening cheek and uplifted hand. Then, before Carlo could turn to see what was thus fascinating her gaze in that strange manner, the vision was gone, and naught left save the gleam of the slender columns from the darkness behind.

## VI.

MR. O'CONNELL was deep in his notes when the young people returned. His wife, her weary head resting upon the altar before her, had fallen into a troubled doze, while Fanny, pillowed upon the black bag, was crouched up at her feet, seemingly in dreamless slumber.

The two women were in semi-darkness, while the rayless light fell full upon the old man's bald head with sickly glare. His eager eye and flying fingers gave evidence of his having struck a happy train of ideas; and as the young people approached, he held up a warning finger to them enjoining silence.

Lilian had begged Carlo on no account to alarm Mrs. O'Connell by

any hint as to what she had seen, praying him only to do his best to get them all out of the place as quickly as possible.

He pressed her hand in reply. They both felt unspeakably happy, and the old despot's imposition of silence was to them a grateful one.

They seated themselves in silence, while a curious mingling of the past, present and future occupied their minds.

Then, after a while, Carlo, who like all his countrymen was a born diplomat, said to Mr. O'Connell :

"Well, signor, is not this a pleasant place? And do you not think that another hour's repose here will quite set the ladies up again?"

"Not by any means, signor. I intend starting at once. It is getting late, and I purpose being at home for dinner. Come, get your things together, all of you, and let us be off."

None needed a second bidding, and in less than five minutes everybody was ready for departure.

One by one the grottos were passed, one by one the galleries threaded. The spirits of all rose involuntarily as they approached the termination of their subterranean wanderings. Even Mrs. O'Connell's voice and gait grew less limp and languid.

Once more they neared the lake, and, that once passed, a short half hour would restore them to daylight and fresh air.

"What an awful noise the water is making," said Lilian, as they entered the last of the chambers on the inner side of the lake. At the same moment Carlo, who was a few paces ahead, stopped short and hastily lowered his candle to the ground.

All his self-possession could not hinder an exclamation of dismay breaking from his lips.

The lake was overflowing its low banks, and the dark waters were creeping over the floor in a thousand snake-like rills; gliding here, deviating there; now with slow, sleepy motion, now with sudden spurt and start; writhing around and swallowing up all before them—rising—rising—ever rising—opposing an impassable barrier to exit.

## VII.

A SORT of niche in the rock, too low to allow of a man standing upright, but amply long and deep enough for him to lie in: masked to view from below by a jutting ledge, and only to be reached by a somewhat perilous climb and the insertion of shoeless feet into the sharp, irregular interstices of the limestone. A bed of dried leaves and fern within the cavity, and upon that bed a man of some thirty years of age, lithe and active in form, marked and mobile in feature. He lay upon his back almost in darkness, one arm across his forehead, the other flung upon the fern amid whose dry fronds his fingers were nervously working.

A feeble ray of light filtered in through a narrow opening near his

feet—an opening that had been artfully closed with green, leafy twigs, so as, from without, to deceive the eye of any but a very near observer. The man's eyes were closed, though it was evident he was not sleeping. The working fingers and a frequent convulsive start gave evidence of the unrest within. There he lay in the more than semi-darkness, with the remembrances of the past rising in cruel array before him: a prisoner as firmly fettered as if the deepest dungeon of the fortress awaiting him had already closed over him; a prey to cruel visions that surged unceasingly up in never-ceasing, ever-changing array.

Long forgotten trifles floated like blossoms upon the torrent of regretful remorse that was wearing his heart and soul away.

He was a youth once more—gay among the gayest—bold amid the boldest—his merry laugh ever the loudest, his lithe foot ever the lightest—the life of every village festival—the light of his widowed mother's days. Years sped on, and the hour came when the cold clay fell upon that loving mother's pale brow, leaving him lonely and abandoned, and cast away upon the tide of life.

But that, too, passed, and he saw himself a happy husband, and an exulting father—rich in all that a wife's love and a child's caress can offer. His home, if a poor one, could boast of a peace and tranquillity that is often denied to those of higher standing. His bread, if earned by the sweat of his brow, was only all the sweeter.

Adriano had been employed in one of the many sawmills around Carrara, and his wages had ever been sufficient to allow of his maintaining his little family in comfort.

But Adriano, like all mortals, had his cross to bear, a cross that galled not only his own shoulders, but what was infinitely worse, those of all he loved. This cross was temper. The depths of that large heart were pure and clear as those of a mountain lake, but like that same lake, subject to terrible storms—storms which in an instant broke up and shattered all the lovely images usually reflected there. In a moment of ungovernable passion, yielding to a certain provocation, he had done what, alas, is so often done in Carrara: stabbed one of his companions with his formidable pocket-knife. One evil moment had sufficed to shatter his household and reduce himself to a fugitive from justice.

The life of the wounded man hung upon a thread. One day hope smiled, the next dark despair showed her stony face and froze the heart of the aggressor's grieving wife as she turned silently away on learning the state of her husband's victim.

She knew where her Adriano lay hid, though she never dared venture to visit him: for she was closely watched by the police, and she knew it. Weekly, however, tidings of her husband were brought her by a faithful friend who carried provisions to the culprit when and how he was able to do so. And with this she must fain content herself till time and destiny should decide their lot.

Things were looking darker than ever. The previous night, Adriano had got word that the wounded man had taken a turn for the worse, that, in fact, hope was all but lost.

"You must try and get off to America," said his friend, rising from his seat beside the unhappy man: "once there, it matters little whether the fellow live or die. Come — don't take on so — there's no good in it. And then, you see —"

Adriano could not master his grief: his whole frame shook with convulsive sobs.

"My wife! my child!" burst from him in uncontrollable grief.

"Hush! hush! not so loud. One can never tell, you know. It's hard —"

"My wife! my poor wife! my Toto!" again broke from the poor fellow.

"Yes. Your wife and child are a terrible drag in a business like yours. But with a clear head and a resolute heart all may yet be managed."

Adriano shook his head. His friend continued:

"I have neither one nor the other, you know; I have saved a few francs, and they are heartily yours. Among comrades, you know —"

Adriano's tears flowed like water.

"Here they are. I brought them on purpose. I know you would do as much for me. There's near a hundred, and with as much more you'll be able to manage. Your wife will try and scrape them together. Now I must be off, and mind you replace the twigs carefully. It makes me laugh to think that none but we know of this other entrance to the grotto. It was a lucky search, that one after the blackbird's nest so long ago, that made us discover it. Addio, amico mio."

Once more the wretched man was alone. But a grain of hope had been sown in his heart, and the silence and gloom seemed to oppress him less.

"Ah" he thought, "if I had but the money to take me over. How I would toil and save till I could send for my wife and my Toto. Gigi, too, has a heart of gold—all his little savings. Well, if God will, he, too, shall be repaid."

He counted over the greasy notes a dozen times, not in avarice, but as he fingered them the silver leaves of hope seemed once more to unfold themselves within his heart. Would they ever blossom? Who could tell? Uncertainty is like a fog, it makes all things, good and bad, loom the bigger through it.

He re-tied the little roll and, child-like, commenced tossing it from hand to hand.

So day after day dragged on. Life reduced to one long night, his home a dripping cavern, his heaven a rocky roof.

Weeks of sojourn there had accustomed his eyes to the pervading



darkness sufficiently to allow of his threading his way pretty freely through the tortuous labyrinths. He was slowly acquiring that sort of sixth sense which naturalists attribute to the bat ; and, all unlearned as he was, had more than once likened his present life to the existence of that animal.

## VIII.

"My poor dear Thomas," murmured Mrs. O'Connell, as, seated at her husband's feet, she took one of his huge hands in her own and attempted to comfort him. "Come, don't be downhearted. Sure Carlo says that at the worst we cannot be kept here more than twenty-four hours, as soon as ever the water goes down. Lilian, my child, does it not seem to you that the flood is sinking?"

The girl shook her head in reluctant denial. The party were sitting upon a rocky table at no great distance from the fatal lake, whose dark waters had now overflowed the greater part of the cavern floor. Here but a puddle, there ankle deep—nowhere of any considerable depth, save in the immediate vicinity of the stream, down towards which the broken ground sloped somewhat abruptly. There it tumbled and rolled, foamed and hissed, utterly forbidding even the thought of crossing its turbulent path. All vestige of board and bank had been swallowed up.

They might have found a less dreary and comfortless place in one of the more distant halls, but they naturally wished to remain as near as possible to the spot from which Carlo assured them aid was sure to arrive sooner or later.

Their position was not a pleasant one, but it was unaccompanied by danger of any sort. Mrs. O'Connell bore it bravely, so did Lilian. Fanny and her master, on the contrary, were utterly upset, and together gave way to childish tears and peevish rejection of all attempts at comforting.

Not comfort, however, for Mr. O'Connell unhesitatingly accepted his wife's shawl and cushion, while Fanny curled herself up at the poor lady's feet and fairly pillowed her ebony head upon the frail woman's lap. Carlo had spread his jacket for the ladies, and would have stripped off his waistcoat, but this they would not allow, for the cold seemed to increase hourly, creeping up with damp, stealthy pace, and enveloping life and limb in its chill embrace.

Hunger, too, began its gnawing, for their meal had been but a slight one, after all. And then we all know what a stimulus to appetite is to be found in the utter dearth of provisions. In a couple of hours more, too, they would be totally in the dark. Only one candle remained, and that once consumed, the prospect was not a bright one.

Carlo did all he could to cheer and encourage them. A twenty-four hours' confinement there was nothing to him personally ; and, light or no light, he would have felt indifferent to it. He felt quite

equal to groping his way back to the entrance. He had been familiar with the grotto from early boyhood. Besides, he felt sure that help would arrive; for his father and half the village knew of their visit, and not seeing them return would be sure to come and learn what was the matter. But he grieved sincerely for his companions, that is to say for Lilian and Mrs. O'Connell; while, in his heart of hearts, he did not, perhaps, very deeply regret the mishap, as far as the other two were concerned.

Minutes passed heavily; all attempt at conversation had been given up. Carlo and Lilian alone exchanged a sentence or two from time to time.

"Oh, I am so hungry," whimpered Mr. O'Connell at last.

His wife suddenly broke off the prayer she was muttering. "How stupid of me to forget. Now *do* forgive me, Thomas, darling. Sure I had quite forgotten. Where is my bag? Thomas, dear, you might have known that I wouldn't forget your bran biscuits—here they are—I put up three for ye. Eat them, my darling, and heaven bless you."

To his shame be it recorded, he took and devoured them without even making semblance of offering a crumb to the rest.

Their last candle had dwindled to less than half its length: in a very short time they would be left in total darkness.

Carlo stood gazing at the rushing waters, his eye flashing and his fists clenched in impotent rage. There they tumbled on in utter indifference to the silent, shivering group huddled together upon their rocky brink. An ugly word broke from the young man's mobile mouth. He was not perfection by any means, and, to the energetic, there is nothing so exasperating as enforced idleness.

For a moment he had a wild idea of attempting to cross. But, strong swimmer though he was, his good sense told him that he would only be running a useless risk. Patience was the only remedy, as long as the torrent should continue to flash and foam on its furious course as it was now doing, leaping forth from the darkness for a second, to be suddenly swallowed up in the hideous swirl of the unknown.

And, even could he have got safe across, of what real service would he have been to his companions?

"I would give a hundred francs to find some other way out of this devil's cavern," he cried aloud, as he turned despairingly away from the seething tide to rejoin his friends.

"I take you at your word, Carlo Forti," answered a deep voice from out a rocky cleft close behind him, while at the same time a dim form showed itself, and the flickering yellow rays fell upon a pale, worn face, strangely and startlingly lit up by a pair of large, lustrous eyes.

"Adriano! You here?" exclaimed Carlo.

"Zitto, Forti, zitto."

All had started to their feet to gather, after a moment's hesitation, round the speakers.

"Do not fear, there is no one here to betray you. This lady has been to see your wife more than once, and only this morning she spoke so kindly to your Toto——"

"La Signora Inglese—la signora of whom Gigi told me so much? Oh, signora, signora ——"

He flung himself on his knees before her, and grasped the hem of her dress.

"Toto's father," whispered Lilian to the bewildered woman.

"Toto's father?" she repeated, "the assassin——" She stopped short.

A loud shout, ringing clear above the din of the waters, awakened a thousand wild echoes through the cavern; at the same time a red blaze flashed forth from the darkness beyond the waters.

There they came—two—three—ten—twenty—half the population of Torano headed by Carlo's father, each a blazing torch in hand, the red light flashing fitfully upon the leathern belts and brass buttons of a couple of policemen, and playing brightly upon the silver lace of a tall carabineer.

Out from the darkness they crowded, halting upon the bank of the swollen stream in long array, holding their lights on high, and making the rocky roof ring again with their shouts of sympathy and encouragement. Instinctively, perhaps, Mrs. O'Connell had stepped before the kneeling Adriano as soon as she descried the police officers. Their uniforms had apparently petrified the poor wretch, for he made no attempt to move. She effectually screened him from the view of those upon the opposite bank.

The old black dress with its seedy convolvuluses proved a momentary barrier; and, even had the police caught sight of the culprit, were not the rushing, raving waters there to keep them at bay.

Lilian pressed to Mrs. O'Connell's side. Fanny, on the contrary, crossed over to where Mr. O'Connell was standing gazing about him with a dazed air.

"Why don't we leave the place?" he exclaimed feebly. "I want to get home. What are we waiting for? And what is that man crouching there at your feet for? Tell him to get up—tell him to get up, do you hear? I won't have a man clinging to your skirts in that fashion. Away, I say ——"

His words, even had they been audible to those on the other side, could not have been understood by them. His gestures, however, as he pointed to some—to them—unseen object behind the two women were beginning to awaken curiosity.

The carabineer, thrusting his torch into the hand of the man next him, stepped knee-deep into the water, peering fixedly across as if scenting a mystery, and trying to solve it.

"Come away," repeated O'Connell, now thoroughly exasperated ; "come away, I say—I won't have this sort of thing—I ——"

He completed the sentence by seizing his wife by the arm and dragging her forcibly aside. His voice rose to a shrill shriek, his features worked, he raised his arm to drag Lilian aside also.

"Down with your hand, Mr. O'Connell. Touch me at your peril. Do you not know that this man, and this man alone, can get us out of this place without hours of long waiting? And if the police see him, he is lost. Can you not ——"

She was stopped by a sudden exclamation from those around.

The carabineer had evidently got an inkling of the state of affairs, for he was partly undressing. Hat and sword were flung aside, coat and boots cast off. There he stood, his revolver between his teeth. The next moment he was amid the maddened waters, whilst a cry of mingled terror, admiration and derision rose from the watchers on the bank.

In the excitement of the moment Adriano had started to his feet. The light fell full upon his pallid features. There—the carabineer has recognised him—for, with a menacing gesture, he plunges yet deeper into the rushing tide.

"Run for it," whispered Carlo to Adriano, "he'll never catch you, even if he does get over."

But Adriano stood motionless, fascinated like the rest by the strange horror of the struggle about to take place.

Stumbling forwards over the broken bed, now swayed to one side, now swerving to the other, on came the white form, showing spectre-like forth from the inky mass of seething water. Ever struggling, ever advancing. Struggling sternly with the flood now frantically seeking to sweep the intrepid intruder off his legs, sweep him triumphantly away to death. Now he swam for a moment amid the black waves—the instant after his flesh was being cruelly torn by the sharp, jagged points upon which he was ruthlessly cast—now he was suddenly borne quite off his feet, then again tossed like a cork amid the whirling eddies : a human toy in the power of a million sporting demons.

Mrs. O'Connell sank upon her knees and prayed aloud. Fanny uttered one shrill shriek after another. The rest gazed in horrified silence.

On struggled the gallant fellow, his revolver between his tightly-closed teeth, his eye measuring every inch of the frantic waters—his iron muscle disputing every line of distance.

Nearer and nearer.

He glances for a second across at Adriano. His strength seems to redouble. Another effort like that and the victory is his. There, a couple of strokes more and he will be safely landed.

"Run, Adriano, run," whispered Carlo, seizing him at the same time by the arm, and endeavouring to push him from the spot.

I say. Don't you see that ——?"

A cry of horror cuts him short.

With a wild toss of both arms on high, the white form rolls heavily over and disappears beneath the black bosom of the waters.

A plunge. Adriano has dashed in to the rescue.

At the same instant the solitary candle, with a farewell flash, suddenly leaps out of life, leaving the gazing group enveloped in a double horror of darkness and doubt.

IX.

THE vintage is over. A vinous smell emanates from and hovers about and around every dwelling. The leaves of the vines have put on their gorgeous hues, as if to make up for the loss of the purple and amber clusters so lately stripped from their wreathing branches. October is flinging her many-tinted mantle over the earth, bidding the dark evergreens stand forth in solemn relief amid the surrounding glories, and causing the olive to wave yet more sadly in the awakening winds.

Lilian is standing at the end of the vineyard, looking eagerly down the rocky pathway leading to Carrara. Nor does she turn at the sound of steps coming up behind her. She looks round only upon old Forti's laying his hand kindly upon her shoulder.

"One would say you had been married but as many weeks as months, by your standing here, all absorbed in the look-out for your husband. God bless you, my daughter, God bless you; for you have brought sunshine to the house, such as I never hoped to have seen again."

Lilian laughed pleasantly, and caught the old man's hand in hers.

"Ah, father, it's not quite all for Carlo that I am here. I want to know how Adriano's trial has ended. Sentence was to be pronounced at Massa to-day, you know; and Carlo—ah, there he comes! Carlo, Carlo, what news?" And off she ran to meet him, while the old man returned towards the house.

"Good news, dearest, good news! That is, comparatively. Adriano has got off with a year's imprisonment. Provocation was fully proved; and then, after all, the man got well again, you know."

"Yes—thank God."

"And his having saved that Carabineer's life at the risk of his own. I shall never forget how he dragged him out of the water in that cursed cavern; he was more like a Newfoundland dog than a man. A brave fellow, indeed. Well, you see, all that did a great deal for him, to say nothing of his having got us all comfortably out of the place."

"Comfortably? All?"

"Well, no. Not quite all. Poor old O'Connell. Ah, it was no easy matter to squeeze him through the narrow crevice. Do you remember——"

The recollection of the scene overpowered him, and he broke into

a peal of laughter that rang clear upon the crisp autumn air— a peal in which Lilian heartily joined.

Old Forti stayed his work amid his vats at the sound, and nodded approvingly.

"Oh, Carlo, mio, we must go this evening and see Adriano's wife, poor woman. Can't we?"

"This moment if you wish it, love. But stay, I have a letter for you."

"From England," cried Lilian glancing at the stamp: "and from dear old Mrs. O'Connell."

"Come under the trellice and read it out to me, darling; the sun is burning here, and I don't want my little wife to have her English complexion spoiled. Come."

They went, and, nodding as they passed to old Forti busy among his vats, seated themselves upon a rustic bench, he with his brawny arm around her slim waist, she with her blonde head lightly laid upon his shoulder. Forgive them. Their married life was yet so young and dreamlike.

"Well?" murmured Carlo, looking fondly down and kissing the wealth of golden hair that lay so temptingly within reach.

Lilian commenced her letter over again: this time translating aloud to her listening husband. Carlo nodded approval at the close of each sentence. You would have said that he was supplying the punctuation which Mrs. O'Connell was somewhat given to neglecting.

The writer and her husband would have liked to return to Ireland, but they feared the troublous times there. They were, for the present, in London lodgings, and would, perhaps, end by going back to Africa. Nothing was settled as yet, everything depended upon circumstances. One thing, however, had been happily effected. "Sunny Italy" was fairly in the press. The "Prince" had graciously accepted the dedication of the same. "Thomas" was in a fever of bliss in consequence. Fanny was growing difficult to manage, etc. etc. Such was the gist of the letter.

"Carlo, mio, I want you to promise me something," said Lilian, as she folded up her old friend's kindly epistle: "will you?"

"Can you ask?"

"Well, then, you will help that poor woman's husband to find work when he comes out of prison. Am I, perhaps, asking too much?"

"Were it ten times more, you should not ask in vain. I will do all you wish. Toto is getting to be worth his weight in gold already, he minds the cows as none of his predecessors ever did before him."

"And you pay him double wages, you dear, kind fellow. I know you do, for his mother told me so."

"Hush! hush! father might hear you, and ——"

A kiss finished the phrase. Could my tale end with anything better?

A. BERESFORD.



## SUCH STUFF AS DREAMS ARE MADE OF.

BY DARLEY DALE.

**I** AM not superstitious.

I am inclined to believe too little rather than too much.

I am not romantic.

On the contrary, I have as little romance in my composition as most men of my profession.

I am a lawyer, and I am—truthful ; and the story I have to tell is as superstitious and romantic as it is true.

Five years ago I was made junior partner in the firm to which I had formerly been articled ; and I certainly was no sleeping partner, for I had to work exceedingly hard. I was young, and strong and healthy ; and the work did me no harm, while the pay was exceedingly good ; so good that, although I did not live up to my income, I lived in ease and thoroughly enjoyed life.

My father was anxious I should marry, and I was not averse to doing so if I could find a suitable wife. I had no romantic notions ; my demands were not exorbitant ; all I desired was a pretty, sensible and amiable girl, and if she had money, all the better. It was not difficult to find the article I wanted ; there are plenty of such girls to be had ; in fact, it was an *embarras de richesses*, and the only obstacle to my happiness was I could not make up my mind which to choose.

My father grew impatient and urged me to decide the matter, and just as I had made up my mind to propose to the prettiest, most amiable and most sensible girl I knew, I had a dream.

Now comes the superstitious part of my tale. I dreamt I was in a foreign city ; but whether the city was in Europe, Asia, Africa or America, I could not tell. It was a cold winter's night when I dreamt this dream, but the city was flooded in summer sun.

I remembered very little about the place ; all was dim and misty. But from this vague background, this fact stood out distinct and clear : viz., I walked along a narrow street with stone arcades on both sides of it, until the sight of a church with seven domes burst upon me ; and, as I walked, I passed two men, each carrying two copper kettles on a curved stick, placed over their left shoulders.

Then suddenly the scene changed, and I was inside the seven-domed church, and standing before a large altar in a side chapel, before which was a magnificent screen of carved white marble.

The details of the chapel, the shrine, the altar, with its big candles, and the statue of some saint, were all blurred and misty ; one thing only I noticed distinctly, and that was the capitals of two of the marble pillars of the screen were dogs.

I was wondering how so strange an idea had occurred to the

architect, when my attention was drawn to a figure kneeling on the steps at the side of the altar.

I moved a little on one side to get a fuller view of the loveliest face, to my thinking, I had ever seen, and as I did so my heart beat fast, for "it was borne in upon me," as the Methodists say, that there knelt my fate.

She was a girl, but of her nationality I could form no guess ; she might be German, English, American, Danish, Swedish or the Italian who sat to Raphael for his Saint Katherine in our National Gallery. She had the same delicately-carved oval face ; the same pale, golden-brown hair ; the same gentle hazel eyes ; the same rapt expression, as if Heaven were open to her gaze as her lips moved in prayer.

As I stood entranced, watching her, she rose, and, with a smile on her face, vanished. Before I had time to regret this, with the quickness of dreams, the scene changed, and I found myself standing before an altar in a church I did not recognise, with the same girl, in bridal attire, by my side ; and as I placed a wedding-ring upon her finger, I felt I was the happiest man on earth. Then I woke, and felt I was the most miserable.

Now begins the romantic part of my story. From that hour I was in love—really, seriously, passionately in love with the girl of my dream. She was no mere ideal, no creation of my fancy ; for me she was a reality, a divine reality, and I soon became convinced she was on earth somewhere waiting for me.

Somewhere ! Aye, but where ?

There was the problem I had to solve, for I was determined to find her ; to do so was now the one aim and object of my life. Day and night I racked my brain to recall the city of my dream—for I was persuaded that there, and there only, should I find her. My futile endeavours to rebuild that dream-city, so that I might find it, drove me nearly mad. I grew nervous and irritable ; I lost my appetite ; I suffered from insomnia and mental depression ; at last I was pronounced by my doctor to be suffering from over-work, and I was ordered perfect rest for twelve months.

I resolved to spend my holiday in searching for my wife, as I called the bride of my dream, so I gave out that I meant to travel. My doctor approved of this, and I started for Venice. Instinct rather than reason drew me there ; but I had a vague notion that St. Mark's at Venice might be the church of my dream ; so to Venice I went, and a better place, as far as my health was concerned, I could not have hit upon. The delicious silence of that lovely city, broken only by the sound of human voices, and the gentle plash of the gondoliers' oars, and, alas ! the rush of the steamers which now ply up and down the grand canal ; this silence, the lazy, dreamy life, the calm beauty of this earthly paradise, soothed my tired nerves, and brought peace to my troubled spirit. I did not find what I came to

search for, but I found health, and, like most people, I was loth to leave the glowing canvases of the Venetian painters, the cusped arches and carved façades of the marble palaces, the richly coloured mosaics and gilded cupolas of St. Mark's, the hearse-like gondolas with their silver prows, the gay scene in the Piazza, the calm beauty of the narrow side canals, and the wealth of art in which Venice abounds.

I was hopeful now, and I left Venice at the end of a month for Constantinople, the city of domes, hoping that there I should find the seven-domed church of my dream.

My idea now was, I must go East, and East I went. To cut my travels short, I went not only East, but West, and North and South also, and with precisely the same result everywhere. I never found a city which resembled in the least the city of my dream; I never found a face, except in Raphael's pictures, which resembled the face of my dream-wife.

One year I wandered over the earth searching for the wife of my dream, sometimes buoyed up with hope, sometimes plunged in despair. As I grew stronger, the hope grew fainter, the despair less desperate, and when I returned to England I returned a wiser but a sadder man. I resolved henceforth to treat my dream only as a dream, unworthy of another thought from a sensible man, and I determined to settle down again to work like a reasonable being.

I did so, I buckled to, and I worked harder than ever. Work was a necessity; it crushed out all thought of my dream trouble, which I began seriously to fear was a mental delusion, which, if indulged, might develop into monomania, or even melancholia.

The only thing I could not do was to bring myself to marry, although my father and my friends urged me strongly to do so; and I felt I was not cured of my delusion until I could do so. My horror of insanity, in any shape or form, is so great that at last I determined I would marry, simply to complete my cure, and that autumn—that was two years since my dream—I found myself engaged to a pretty, sensible, amiable girl named Mabel Stuart. I did not tell her the story of my dream, I think now I ought to have done so; but I wanted to forget it, lest in remembering it my mind should become affected.

We were a very matter-of-fact couple. I was not in love with Mabel, neither was she with me; but we were excellent friends, and the happiest marriages are often based on friendship. The marriage was fixed for the following Easter. I wished it to be earlier, but Mabel would not consent. Her brother was in India with his regiment, and nothing, she declared, should induce her to be married until he came back, which he would do in April.

Easter was late that year; it did not fall till the end of April, and our wedding day was fixed for the 30th. At the beginning of the month, some very tiresome but important business made it necessary for me to go to Padua for a few days.

Annoyed as I was at having to leave London just then, I resolved to go, for no one else could transact this business quite as well as I could ; so, with many grumblings and growlings, I set off.

Unlike Lucentio, I had no "great desire to see fair Padua, nursery of arts," and I arrived prepared to find it the most uninteresting place on the face of the earth.

I scarcely looked at the town as I drove from the station to the hotel ; but the general impression the place made on me was that there were very few foreigners to be seen ; but as Padua is somewhat off the beaten track of tourists, this was not surprising ; there were also many more men than women in the streets ; but then I remembered it was a university town. The houses were of white stone, and the glare of the sun was intense, even in early April.

I had two hours before dinner, and as I could do no business that day, I asked what there was to be seen in Padua, and I was directed to the Church of S. Anthony, the patron-saint of the place. Il Santo, as the Paduans call him and his church.

The streets, I now noticed, were narrow and had arcades, under which I gladly walked for the sake of the shade ; still I had no recollection of my dream's arcaded streets, until presently I passed a man carrying two copper vessels like kettles, one at each end of a curved stick, over his shoulder. Instantly it flashed upon me that Padua was the city of my dream. The heat, the arcaded streets, the water-carrier, all were there ; if the seven-domed church were also there, no shadow of doubt would remain.

With beating heart and quickened pulses, I hurried on past the shops, full of cheap rubbish, which lined the arcade, till, at the end of the street, I descried an ugly brick building, more beautiful in my eyes than the Cathedral at Florence, the fairest building on earth, for it was a church with seven domes. Like a madman I ran towards it, pushing aside the shopkeepers, who, seeing a stranger pass, came out of their shops to offer me rosaries and images and pictures of the Saint. Breathless I reached it and entered.

At first I saw nothing inside the church to remind me of the second part of my dream ; but, as I advanced up the aisle, I came to the shrine of S. Anthony guarded by dogs, and recognised at once the altar near which I had seen my dream-wife.

There were the dogs on the capitals still keeping watch ; there was the marble screen ; there was the altar, with its lighted candles and statue of the Saint ; and there—there, was my wife.

Not Mabel, not the girl I was engaged to marry in three weeks' time, but the girl of my dream, my love, my bride ; and if of flesh and blood, the only woman I meant to marry.

I could have shouted for joy ; I could barely contain myself ; I longed to seize her and clasp her to my bosom as my long-lost and long-sought bride.

I was mad with joy.

I forgot my business, my marriage, Mabel, everything ; all I saw, all I thought of was that kneeling figure.

There she knelt, just as I had seen her in my dream, her lips moving in prayer.

Would she vanish as in the dream ?

If so, I should go raving mad ; of that, I felt certain, for I was awake and, I believed, in my right mind.

In fear and trembling I stood and watched her, feeling that my reason, as well as my happiness, was trembling in the balance. At length she rose, picked up a sunshade which lay at her feet (I breathed more freely ; I knew she was mortal) and went round to the back of the shrine, where was the tomb containing the body of S. Anthony. I followed in time to see her kiss the marble slab of the tomb, and oh, how I envied that tomb ! Here she was joined by another lady whom I rightly guessed to be her mother, and they moved away to look at Giotto's portrait of the Saint, which I heard them say in English was in the chancel.

I was determined to speak to them ; and, as they were probably the only English people besides myself in Padua, I could easily make some excuse for doing so. I began by asking them where Giotto's portrait, which I heard of a moment before for the first time in my life, was ; and as we looked at it we got into conversation.

"Is there much to see in Padua ?" I asked.

"There are Giotto's frescoes in S. Maria dell' Arena, said to be the finest in Italy ; you must see them," said my dream-bride.

"There is plenty to see here. You can *do* Padua in a day, but a week is too short to exhaust its beauties in. We have been here a week and we shall stay another," said her mother.

"How many days have you to spare for Padua ?" said my dream-wife.

"Oh ! I am not pressed for time. I shall stay a week at least. I am at the Stella d'Or," I answered, hoping to hear they were also.

"So are we ; so we shall meet again," said the mother. A hint of dismissal I was obliged to take.

Then followed a week of delirious happiness, spent mostly with my new friends in exploring the beauties of Padua ; the intervals were occasionally occupied with my business.

Together we studied Giotto's frescoes one morning, Titian's another, Mantegna's another ; together we sauntered round the busy Piazzas of Erbi and Frutti, with that large hall in the centre ; the fruit market on one side and the vegetable market on the other ; together we admired the beautiful Thirteenth Century architecture of the baptistry ; together we drove round the great modern sunny Piazza of Vittorio Emanuele, with its grass centre and statues round it ; together we sat in the shade of the botanical gardens, or wandered through the narrow arcaded streets, admiring the quaint knockers and the picturesque appearance of some of the houses.

The more I saw of Katherine—that was her name, though neither saint nor shrew, but just the sweetest thing in creation—the more I loved her; the more determined I was to marry her. The more certain I felt our marriage was made in Heaven, the more puzzled I was how to accomplish it on earth.

"Where there's a will there's a way," says the proverb, but strong as my will was, I could see no way out of my dilemma, no way consistent with honour at least. Of course I could make a clean breast of it to Mabel and ask her to release me, but I should deserve to be horsewhipped for my pains if I did so; no sane person would believe in my dream-story, true as it nevertheless was.

I was at once the happiest and most miserable of men: happiest because I had reason to hope my love was returned; wretched because I was doing wrong, and could see no way of repentance.

The only way which suggested itself was to put a bullet through my excited brain; but this my conscience would not let me do. At last I made up my mind; I would tell Katherine and her mother the whole truth, and act upon their advice. They would believe my dream story; Mabel, I knew, wouldn't. I was on the point of making this confession to Katherine first, when, just as I was going to join her for that purpose on the balcony of the hotel one evening, a letter was brought me from Mabel, with a foreign post-mark.

Wondering what this might mean, I broke the seal, and read as follows:

"MY DEAR JACK,

"When you get this I shall be the wife of Captain Bond, a brother officer of Tom's. We have loved each other all our lives, but our people would never hear of it, as he has only his pay. They will hear of it now, though. You never loved me, you know, so though I am behaving disgracefully, I think you will soon find someone to console you. I could not help it, Jack; my life at home would have been spelt in four letters if I had refused you. And I was so fond of Charlie! All the same, I am treating you very badly, but I hope you will still be my best friend.

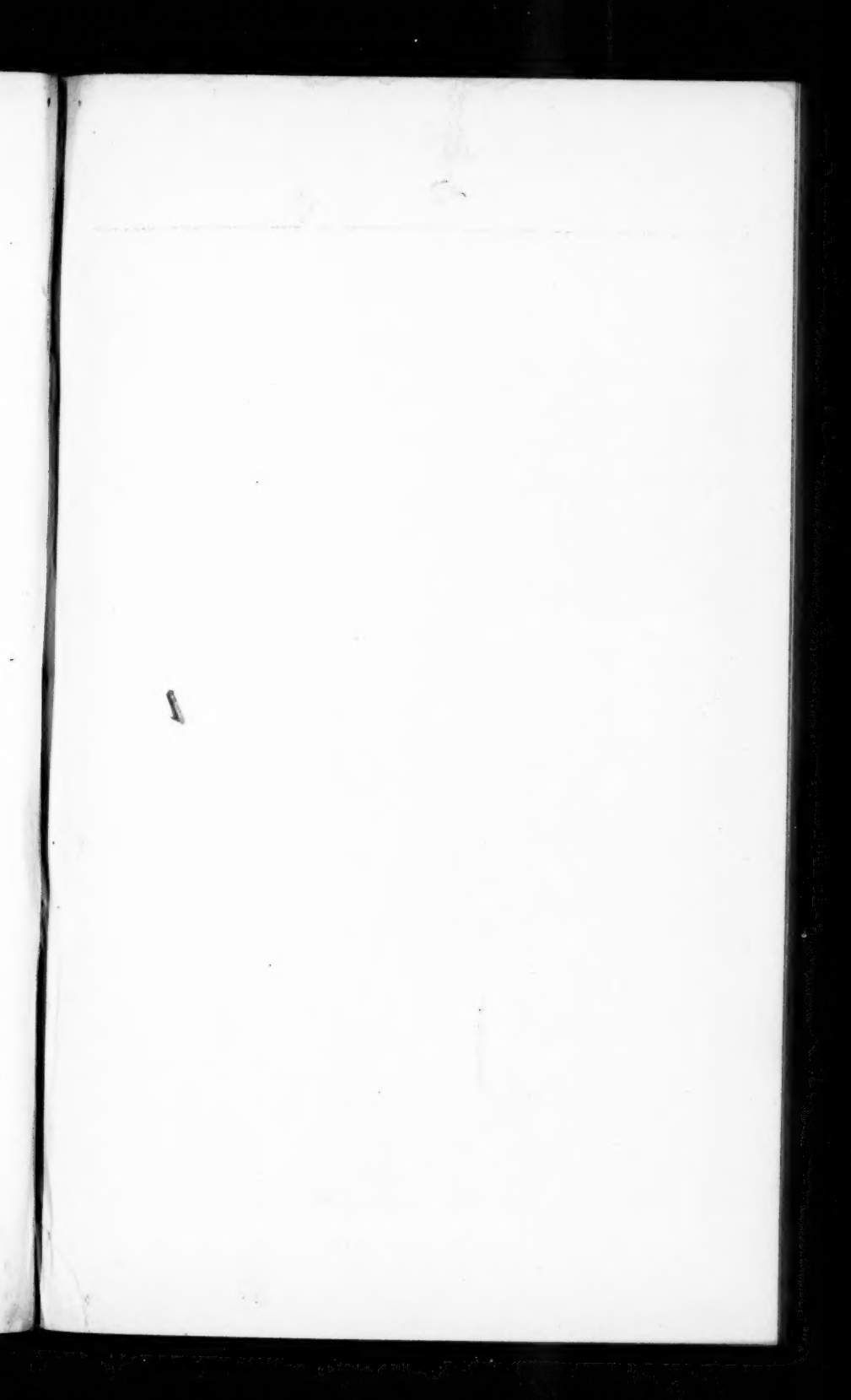
"MABEL."

That day I was engaged to Katherine. We were married that summer, and I am as happy as man can be with the wife of my dream.

Katherine has never told me what she was praying for that day I found her before S. Anthony's shrine; but on enquiry I have discovered he is the saint the Paduans invoke when they want to find a wife or a husband. He found my wife for me, though I never asked him.

Did Katherine?







M. L. GOW

R. TAYLOR

"DO YOU TRAVEL ALONE?"